



COURSE 1 • 7 WEEKS

# Hearing His Voice

*Sharpening how we recognise and steward  
what God says, for ourselves and others*

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*"Speak, Lord. Your servant hears."*

— 1 SAMUEL 3:10

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## COURSE OVERVIEW

## Why this course exists

Every believer has been invited into a conversation with God that runs for a lifetime. Through Scripture, through the Spirit, through one another, God speaks — to instruct, to encourage, to comfort, to commission. And the practice of recognising that voice with clarity, testing it carefully, and stewarding it faithfully is one of the great quiet disciplines of a maturing life.

This course is about sharpening that practice.

Not awakening something that is not already there. Not introducing a subject Scripture has not already introduced. Training, maturing, equipping — a group of believers who already hear, who already honour what God has said, and who want to go deeper in the craft of it.

Paul's instruction to Corinth still holds for us: *follow the way of love, and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy* (1 Corinthians 14:1). Eagerly desire. Not because we lack the gift, but because growing in it is the ongoing work of the body.

## What the group walks through

Over seven weeks, a small group practices together around the fundamentals of hearing and stewarding God's voice:

- 1 The Voice That Still Speaks** — Sharpening our listening.
- 2 What God Says About You** — Settling identity as the foundation of hearing.
- 3 Recognising and Testing** — The biblical tests for what we hear.
- 4 Remembering Well** — Recording and returning to what God has said.
- 5 Love as the Frame** — 1 Corinthians 13 and the posture of every gift.
- 6 Speaking It Well** — Prophesying for upbuilding, encouragement, and consolation.
- 7 Carrying It Forward** — Building rhythms of remembering in our households and communities.

Each week combines pre-reading, Scripture, discussion, short teaching, and practice. By the end, every participant will have heard, tested, recorded, loved through, and spoken an encouraging word.

# Who this is for

Small groups. Home groups. Discipleship pairs. Youth groups (16+). Church staff teams. Mentor-mentee partnerships. Any table of believers who want to go deeper together in the way God speaks and the way we steward what He says.

This course assumes you already know God speaks. It assumes you already want to honour what He says. It simply offers seven weeks of practice for sharpening the craft.

If you or anyone in your group is not yet sure God still speaks today (perhaps from a Reformed, Baptist, or conservative-evangelical background where the cessation of the gifts has been taught), the upstream course *Does God Still Speak?* is built for that. It honours the cessationist tradition, walks Scripture carefully, and ends with three honourable destinations rather than a forced decision. Many groups will benefit from running it before this one.

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## How the course is structured

**Participant reading** (15 minutes before each session): everyone reads the week's material.

**Group session** (90 minutes): welcome, pre-read discussion, Scripture anchor, short teaching, practice, close.

**Between sessions:** one daily 5-minute practice that reinforces the week's theme.

The facilitator edition contains everything in the participant guide plus teaching notes, discussion prompts, scripts for prophetic practice, and prayer prompts for each session.

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## A word about love

This course teaches people to prophesy. It also teaches them to do it in love — because Paul tells us plainly that without love, every gift becomes noise. The entire posture of this course sits between 1 Corinthians 12 (the gifts) and 1 Corinthians 14 (prophecy for the building up of the church). The chapter in between is not incidental. It is the whole point.

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## How to use this guide

Pastors and facilitators: download the full facilitator edition. Read it through before week one. Every week has a session plan and practice notes.

Small group leaders: share the weekly link with participants as pre-read. Gather weekly. Practice in the room.

Participants: read the week's material, come to the session, practice.

The goal is simple. A group of believers growing together in hearing God clearly, testing wisely, recording faithfully, loving deeply, and speaking helpfully.



● WEEK 1 OF 7



## SESSION 1

# The Voice That Still Speaks

*Hearing God is a lifelong practice. This week, we sharpen our listening.*

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### SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 3:1-10

### SESSION

90 min

### PRACTICE

10 minutes of listening silence, then share what came

## PARTICIPANT READING

## Before the session

Read this through at least once. Bring one honest reflection to the group.

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## The voice that still speaks

The Bible opens with a voice. *Let there be light*. It does not open with a feeling, or a principle, or a plan. It opens with a voice — a voice that still speaks light into dark places.

That voice has spoken through every generation since. Through the prophets. Through His Son. Through His Spirit in His people today. Every believer, in every season, is invited into the same ongoing conversation.

This week is about sharpening that conversation. Not starting it — we are all already in it. Growing in clarity. Learning, as a lifelong discipline, to recognise God's voice more quickly, respond to it more faithfully, and carry what He says more carefully.

The craft of listening is always maturing. Elijah the prophet needed the *low whisper*. Samuel the boy needed Eli the priest to recognise what he could not yet name. Even the apostles kept growing in it. We are all in that same lineage — learning the shape of His voice over the length of a life.

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## What Scripture says about ongoing hearing

Jesus said, *my sheep hear my voice* (John 10:27). Present tense. Ongoing. A living description of the normal life of those who belong to Him.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, *follow the way of love, and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy* (1 Corinthians 14:1). The imperative stands for every generation — eagerly desire, grow in it, practice it.

And the writer of Hebrews, speaking of the supremacy of Christ, said, *long ago, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets — but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son* (Hebrews 1:1-2). The point is not that the speaking has stopped. The point is that it has reached its fullest, truest form in Christ, and continues through His Spirit today.

God is not quieter now. He is closer.

# Three places we can sharpen

In any discipline of the Christian life — prayer, fasting, Scripture reading, generosity — there are always places to grow. Listening is no different. Here are three places a small group can sharpen together:

**1. Expectancy.** Over time, a listening believer learns that God speaks more often than they first realised. Thoughts that seemed like coincidence were, on closer reflection, God. Scriptures that came alive were God. Phrases another believer spoke that stayed with us were God. Paying attention changes what we notice.

**2. Discernment.** Every honest listener learns that impressions come from several places — from us, from the Spirit, from the enemy, from our tradition, from our tiredness. Telling them apart is a craft, and Scripture gives us tools. We will spend week three on these.

**3. Stillness.** God rarely shouts over a crowded room. Elijah found Him not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but in the *low whisper* (1 Kings 19:12). Growing in hearing usually includes growing in stillness — in regular, unhurried time where a voice can be received.

These three — expectancy, discernment, stillness — are the quiet work of a maturing life of hearing.

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## The Samuel moment

1 Samuel 3 is a beautiful little story, and worth sitting with.

Samuel, still a boy, is sleeping in the temple. God calls his name. Samuel thinks it's his mentor Eli. This happens three times before Eli, who knows this pattern from his own lifetime with God, finally tells the boy: "*Go, lie down, and if He calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.'*"

Two things are worth noticing.

First, the text opens with: *the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.* It was a quieter season in Israel. And in the middle of it, God calls a boy. Quieter seasons are never God's silence. They are often the places He begins new things.

Second, Eli is the one who teaches Samuel how to respond. Eli himself was not perfect. But his long history with God gave him the ear to recognise what was happening in the next generation and to point the way. The Lord uses those who have been listening for years to help form those who are still learning.

Samuel's answer becomes the posture of every listener: *Speak, Lord, your servant hears.*

Not *fix me*. Not *prove yourself*. Not *impress me*. Just *speak — I am listening*.

# What hearing God looks like in practice

Hearing God is not reserved for a spiritual elite. It is not a performance. It is not usually dramatic. It is the ordinary, lifelong experience of a believer turning their attention toward the One who has been speaking to them from the beginning.

Sometimes His voice comes as a thought that is kinder and cleaner than our own. Sometimes as a line of Scripture that suddenly lights up. Sometimes as a picture, a knowing, or a conviction. Sometimes through another believer speaking what they have heard on our behalf.

God speaks in the ways He has always spoken — through Scripture, through His people, through circumstances, and through the inner witness of the Spirit.

What changes over time is not whether He speaks. It is how clearly we hear, how quickly we recognise, and how faithfully we respond.

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## What this week is for

This course does not aim to convince anyone that God still speaks. Scripture has already done that, and we are all here because we believe it. This course aims to give a small group seven weeks to practice — to listen together, test together, record together, speak together.

Tonight we begin simply. We will sit in silence and listen. We will share what came. And we will start the work of sharpening an ear that God has been training in each of us for years.

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## Before you come to the session

Bring one honest reflection on each of these:

Name a moment recently when you sensed God saying something to you. What was it, and what did you do with it?

Which of the three places — expectancy, discernment, stillness — is the one you most want to grow in?

Is there a season when your listening has been clearer? What was different about it?

Bring one of those answers to the group.

### FOR THE FACILITATOR

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#### Aim of the session

By the end of the evening, every person in the room will have spent unhurried time listening for God and shared one honest reflection with the group. Nothing more complicated than that. The goal is to give a group of believers — who have been hearing God all along — a clean space to practice together.

## Before you arrive

Read the participant reading twice.

Sit somewhere quiet for 10 minutes and practice the listening exercise yourself. Do not lead a practice you have not done that week.

Have pens and paper ready — some people hear better with a pen in their hand.

Read 1 Samuel 3:1–10, John 10:27, and Hebrews 1:1–2 slowly.

## Session outline (90 min)

**1. Welcome and opening (10 min)** Brief prayer. Read aloud Hebrews 1:1–2. Name what you are doing in this course together — seven weeks of practice around hearing God's voice, recognising it, testing it, recording it, loving through it, and speaking it. Set two ground rules: (1) no spiritual one-upmanship in this room, (2) whatever anyone shares stays in this room.

**2. Pre-read discussion (20 min)** Three questions. Let people answer; do not rush.

*Name a moment recently when you sensed God saying something to you. What was it, and what did you do with it?*

*Which of the three places — expectancy, discernment, stillness — is the one you most want to grow in?*

*Is there a season when your listening has been clearer? What was different about it?*

Let the answers be real. Some people will come with rich, recent examples. Others will come with something from years ago. Both are good starting points.

**3. Scripture anchor — 1 Samuel 3:1–10 (10 min)** Read the whole passage aloud. Slowly. Then ask two questions:

*What do you notice about the season Samuel is in? (Verse 1 is key: the word of the Lord was rare.)*

*What does Samuel's response — "speak, Lord, your servant hears" — assume about him?*

Make the point that Samuel's posture was not "*prove yourself*" or "*fix me*." It was "*I'm listening*." That is the posture we are practicing all seven weeks.

**4. Micro-teaching (15 min)** Three points, no more. Keep this tight.

*God is still speaking.* Jesus said His sheep *hear* His voice — present tense. We are in that ongoing conversation.

*Three places every listener can grow.* Expectancy (paying attention to what we have been dismissing). Discernment (learning the shape of His voice with practice). Stillness (giving Him unhurried space). This course will walk us through each.

*Love is the frame.* Hearing God is never a private achievement — it is for the building up of His people. We will return to this at week five.

Do not turn this into a sermon. Fifteen minutes. Leave space for the practice.

**5. Practice: listening silence (25 min)**

This is the heart of the session. Do it properly.

Set the room: lights dim if possible, phones face down, pens and paper for everyone. Say this:

*"For the next ten minutes we are going to be silent. Not prayer you speak. Listening prayer. Ask God one question: 'Is there something You want to say to me tonight?' Then stop talking. Write down anything that comes — thoughts, pictures, Scriptures, phrases, impressions. You are not trying to force anything. You are just listening. If nothing comes, that is fine. We are practicing — and practice takes time."*

Ten minutes of silence. Full ten. Resist the urge to cut it short.

When the ten minutes ends, invite people to share. Not everyone has to. Let two or three share what they received. Affirm what was shared without over-interpreting.

## 6. Closing (10 min)

Recap the aim: we practiced listening together tonight.

Explain the between-sessions practice: five minutes of listening silence every day this week. Same question. Same posture. Write it down.

Read aloud again: *Speak, Lord, your servant hears.*

Close in prayer. Bless the group to grow in hearing Him.

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## What to watch for

**The quiet receiver.** Someone who heard something but is hesitant to share. Do not push. Make space. A simple *"if you'd like to share, the room is listening"* is enough.

**The performer.** Rare, but it happens. Someone who wants to *say the impressive thing* in sharing. Gently keep the room grounded — *"thank you, let's hear from someone else now."*

**The one who heard something heavy.** Occasionally someone receives something significant — a call, a conviction, a word of comfort about a long wound. Acknowledge it. Don't rush to fix it. Offer to follow up afterwards.

**Silence.** If no one wants to share, don't force it. Close in prayer and try again next week. Practice takes time.

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## Prayer prompts for the group

If you pray over the group at the end, pray these things:

That expectancy would rise — that small impressions would be noticed and honoured.

That discernment would mature — that each listener would grow in recognising the shape of God's voice.

That the group would become a place where hearing is practiced together, not just privately.

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## Looking ahead

Next week is about identity: *What God Says About You*. Settled identity is the floor a mature listening life stands on. If anyone surfaces an identity theme tonight, note it — week two will address it directly.

● WEEK 2 OF 7



## SESSION 2

# What God Says About You

*You cannot hear clearly if your identity is shaky*

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### SCRIPTURE

Judges 6:11-16

### SESSION

90 min

### PRACTICE

Ask God what He says about you. Write it down. Record it aloud.

## PARTICIPANT READING

## Before the session

Read this through once. Bring one word or phrase that names who you feel you are on your worst day — we will work with it in the session.

## The strange way God names people

When God starts a story, He almost always renames the main character.

Abram becomes Abraham. Jacob becomes Israel. Simon becomes Peter. Saul becomes Paul. And Gideon — a terrified young man threshing wheat in a winepress to hide from the enemy — gets called something so out of proportion to his circumstance that it reads like a joke:

*"The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valour."*

Mighty. Man. Of valour. To a boy hiding from Midianites in a hole.

Gideon's response is the response of almost everyone who has ever heard a word from God about themselves. He protests. He lists his disqualifications. *My clan is the weakest. I am the least in my father's house.* And the angel just keeps going. God is not naming who Gideon feels he is. God is naming who Gideon will become when he steps into what God has already decided about him.

This is how God speaks to His people. Not with flattery. Not with lies. With *prophecy about identity*.

## Why this matters for hearing God

Here is the uncomfortable truth: you cannot hear clearly if your sense of self is shaky.

If you don't know whether God actually likes you, you will filter everything you hear through that one unsettled question. If you suspect He is mostly disappointed in you, every impression will sound like disappointment. If you don't know if you are His, you will spend your prayer time auditioning for a place you already have.

Samuel could say *"speak, Lord, your servant hears"* because he knew he was God's. Settled identity was the floor the hearing happened on.

This is why week two of this course is identity. It is not a detour. It is the foundation everything else stands on.

# What God actually says

When you listen for God's voice about yourself, you will not usually hear an abstract theological statement. You will hear something like a name.

Scripture is full of these names:

*Beloved.* (Matthew 3:17, said over Jesus before He had done any public ministry. Belovedness precedes performance.)

*Chosen.* (Ephesians 1:4 — before the foundation of the world.)

*Adopted.* (Ephesians 1:5 — you are not a servant trying to earn a place. You were brought into the family.)

*Friend.* (John 15:15 — no longer slaves. Friends.)

*Priest.* (1 Peter 2:9 — with direct access, with authority to speak.)

*Mine.* (Isaiah 43:1 — *I have called you by name. You are Mine.*)

Every one of these is something God says about you. Not one of them is conditional on yesterday's performance.

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## But what about who I actually am?

Here is where people push back. *"But I really am a coward. I really am angry. I really am unforgiving. I really am scared."*

Yes. And.

Gideon really was hiding in a winepress. That was accurate. God was not confused about it. He called him *mighty man of valour* anyway.

What God says about you is not a denial of who you are on your worst day. It is a declaration of who you are *in Him* — and who you will become when you start acting in agreement with what He says, rather than in agreement with what your fear, your family, or your accuser says.

Identity from God is not pretending. It is prophecy about your truest self.

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## The lies this silences

Most of us carry one or two quiet sentences that run underneath our lives.

*I am not wanted. I am too much. I am not enough. I will always be alone. I am a disappointment. I was a mistake. I am only valuable when I perform. I am fundamentally broken.*

These are not the voice of God. Ever. No matter how religious they sound, no matter how long you have believed them, no matter how much evidence you can assemble for them.

The Accuser has a job, and his job is to accuse. Revelation 12:10 names him *the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them day and night*. If your inner monologue mostly sounds like an accusation, you may be listening to the wrong voice.

Hearing God about your identity is often a process of *replacing sentences*. One true one for one false one, until the floor of your soul is built on what He says.

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## Practising this week

The practice for this week is simple and will feel a little exposing:

- 1 Ask God.** Find ten quiet minutes. Ask Him, "*What do You say about me?*" Not in general. About you.
- 2 Write it down.** Whatever comes — a word, a phrase, a Scripture, a picture — write it down.
- 3 Test it.** Does what you heard line up with Scripture? Would a loving Father say this? Does it reflect grace rather than performance? If yes, keep going.
- 4 Record it aloud.** Say it out loud. Record it on your phone. There is something about hearing a thing in your own voice, speaking God's words over yourself, that changes how they settle.

Do this at least three times this week. Same question. Collect the answers.

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## Before you come to the session

Come with two things:

**One word or phrase** that names who you feel you are on your worst day (we will not force you to share it publicly — bring it for yourself).

**One line** that you think God might say about you. Even if you're unsure. Even if it feels presumptuous.

Identity is the floor the rest of this course stands on. Let's lay it down together.

### FOR THE FACILITATOR

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#### Aim of the session

By the end of the evening, every person in the room will have asked God what He says about them, written down at least one word or phrase, and heard it spoken over them by someone else in the group. Identity gets laid down tonight. The rest of the course is built on it.

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#### Before you arrive

Re-read Judges 6:11–16 slowly. Notice how many times Gideon protests and God just keeps going.

Do the identity practice yourself this week. Do not lead what you have not done.

If there is someone in the group you already know is carrying a hard accusation about themselves — a deep *"I am unwanted"* or *"I am broken"* — pray for them ahead of time. This session may surface it.

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## Session outline (90 min)

**1. Welcome and recap (10 min)** Open with a brief check-in on last week's listening practice. Who heard something? What did you do with it? Do not let this run long. The focus tonight is identity.

**2. Pre-read discussion (15 min)** Three questions.

*What is one sentence you carry about yourself that is hard to argue with? (Do not force people to answer this one out loud. Have them write it privately.)*

*When you imagine what God thinks about you, what comes to mind? Be honest — is it affectionate? Is it disappointed? Is it neutral?*

*Gideon calls himself the least. God calls him mighty. Which one is "real"?*

**3. Scripture anchor — Judges 6:11–16 (10 min)** Read it aloud. Then ask:

*What does God call Gideon before Gideon has done anything valiant?*

*What does this tell us about how God speaks identity?*

Make the point: *The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valour* is prophetic speech about Gideon's truest self. God is not confused. He is calling forth.

**4. Micro-teaching (15 min)** Three points.

**God names before He uses.** He renames Abram, Jacob, Simon, Saul, Gideon. Calling always follows re-naming.

**The Accuser's job is to accuse.** If your inner monologue sounds mostly like an accusation, you are listening to the wrong voice. Revelation 12:10.

**Identity is not pretending.** It is prophecy about your truest self in Christ. It does not deny who you are on your worst day. It declares who you are *in Him*.

**5. Practice: ask and receive (30 min)**

This is the heart of the session. Do it carefully.

*Step one (10 min, silent).* Have everyone sit with pens and paper. Say:

*"For the next ten minutes, ask God one question: 'What do You say about me?' Write down anything that comes. A word, a phrase, a Scripture, a picture. If nothing comes, write down a Scripture you know names who you are in Him."*

*Step two (20 min, in pairs).* Pair people up. Same pairing for both rounds. Each person:

- 1 Shares what they received. Briefly.
- 2 Their partner listens.
- 3 Their partner then says back one thing God has shown *the partner* about the first person. Keep it simple. *"I think God is saying to you: you are His beloved son. He is not disappointed. He sees you."*
- 4 Swap.

Coach the room: *keep it encouraging, edifying, and comforting. 1 Corinthians 14:3. That is the brief.*

## 6. Closing (10 min)

Ask: *"Is there one word someone received tonight that the whole group should pray into?"*

Let one or two people share.

Have the group speak that word over those people.

Explain the between-sessions practice: every day this week, ask God the same question and write down what you receive. By next week you should have a small list of things God has said about you.

Close in prayer. Bless each person by name if you can.

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## What to watch for

**The one who receives nothing.** Someone will sit in the ten-minute silence and hear nothing. That is fine. Give them a Scripture. *The beloved of the Lord rests secure.* (Deuteronomy 33:12.) Let them carry that until something of their own comes.

**The one who hears something painful.** Sometimes a false voice surfaces in the silence. If someone shares something that sounds like accusation — *"I heard that I'm a burden"* — gently name it. That is not God's voice. Replace it with a Scripture.

**The one who protests like Gideon.** Someone will say *"I can't believe God would say that about me."* That is the whole point. Let the group speak it over them until they start to believe.

**Emotion.** Identity work surfaces real wounds. Have tissues. Don't rush people through.

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## Prayer prompts for the group

For each person's name to be re-written in their own ears as God names them.

For every accusing sentence to be replaced with a truer one.

For the courage to believe what God says even when the evidence seems to say the opposite.

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## Looking ahead

Next week is *Recognising vs Imagining* — how to test what you think you heard. People will have started hearing things this week. They will need tools for testing them before week three. This is the natural sequence.



SESSION 3

# Recognising vs Imagining

*How to test what you think you heard*

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SCRIPTURE

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

SESSION

90 min

PRACTICE

Bring a word you have received recently. Test it with the group using the four tests.

## PARTICIPANT READING

## Before the session

Read this through. Bring one word or impression you have received in the last few weeks — from your own listening times, from another believer, or from something that came up in last week's practice. We will test it together.

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## The most common question

Once people start listening, the question arrives quickly: *how do I know if that was God, or if it was me?*

This is a good question. It is asked in Scripture, and it has a sensible answer.

The Bible never asks believers to hear without testing. It assumes both. *Test everything; hold fast what is good* (1 Thessalonians 5:21). *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God* (1 John 4:1). *The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets* (1 Corinthians 14:32).

The expectation is not that every believer becomes infallible. It is that every believer learns to test.

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## Three possible sources

When you have a thought or impression, there are really only three places it can be coming from.

**1. You.** Your own feelings, convictions, anxieties, desires, ambitions. This is normal and not always wrong. Sometimes *you* know something true about yourself or someone else. Sometimes *you* are rehearsing a fear. Your own voice is not the enemy — but it is not automatically God either.

**2. The enemy or an unclean influence.** Scripture is clear that there are voices in the spiritual realm that are not God's. The Accuser accuses. A lying spirit lies. These voices almost always sound either *condemning* or *inflating* — tearing you down or puffing you up. They rarely sound like a Father.

**3. God.** A voice that is kinder, cleaner, and truer than anything you would have come up with on your own. A voice that consistently lines up with the character of Jesus and the testimony of Scripture.

## The four tests

Over centuries, the church has consolidated the testing of impressions into a small number of practical questions. They are not complicated.

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### Test one — Scripture

Does what you heard agree with the Bible? Not one verse yanked out of context. The whole of Scripture.

God does not contradict Himself. If you think He told you to leave your spouse, that is not Him. If you think He told you to hate your enemy, that is not Him. If you think He told you that you are worthless, that is not Him. If you think He told you that your sin disqualifies you forever, that is not Him.

The Bible is the plumb line. Any word from God will be straight against it.

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### Test two — Character

Does what you heard sound like Jesus?

Jesus is the clearest revelation of who God is. *If you have seen me, you have seen the Father* (John 14:9). So when an impression arrives, ask: does this sound like the Jesus of the gospels?

Jesus is kind without being weak. He is honest without being cruel. He is direct without being condemning. He tells hard truths in gentle ways and gentle truths with weight. If a word feels harsh, sneering, shaming, or panicked, that is not His voice. If it feels loving *and* truthful — that is a good sign.

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### Test three — Fruit

Will this word, acted on, produce fruit that looks like the Holy Spirit's?

Paul lists that fruit in Galatians 5:22-23 — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Words from God, even hard ones, tend to produce fruit. They lead to courage, to repentance, to hope, to action, to peace. They don't lead to fear, anxiety, pride, division, or paralysis.

If acting on this impression would produce life in you or someone else, that is a strong signal it is from God.

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### Test four — Community

Is there any witness from other believers?

This is the test we most often skip, and the one we most need. *The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets* (1 Corinthians 14:32). God does not expect you to navigate alone.

When you receive something significant, bring it to one or two trusted believers. Not for their approval. For their discernment. Sometimes they will confirm what you are sensing. Sometimes they will gently add something you missed. Sometimes they will flag that this might not be God at all.

Pride says, *I don't need anyone else to test this*. Humility says, *I would rather be slowed down by the body than be wrong alone*.

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## What testing is not

Testing is not doubt. Testing is not a lack of faith. Testing is not you being too scared to act.

Testing is the work of a mature believer who has learned that hearing God is not the same as never being wrong. It is a practice, not a performance.

And — crucially — testing happens *before* you speak the word, not after. If you think God gave you a word for someone else, test it privately before you say it publicly. It is far easier to hold a word back than to un-say it.

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## Some honest notes

A few things worth naming before the session.

**Not every impression needs to be tested at a council meeting.** If God says to you while you're on the bus, *"text your sister today,"* you can just text her. Testing scales to consequence. The bigger the claim, the more testing it needs.

**Some words take years to clarify.** You may hear something at twenty-two that does not come fully true until you're forty. That does not mean it wasn't God. It means it was a long word. Course two is built around this.

**You will sometimes get it wrong.** Every honest prophetic person has. The shame-spiral that follows is almost always worse than the actual error. Apologise if necessary, learn, keep going. God is not scared of a growing learner. He is more interested in a growing learner than in a cautious one who never listens again.

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## The practice for this week

Bring one word you have received recently. It could be:

Something you heard in your own listening time.

Something another believer spoke over you.

An impression that keeps coming back.

Something from last week's identity exercise.

In the session, we will run it through the four tests together. This is not to humiliate anyone. It is to practice, as a group, what mature hearing actually looks like.

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## Before you come to the session

Write down the word or impression you will bring. One sentence if possible.

Try running it through the four tests on your own first. Which one feels hardest to apply?

### FOR THE FACILITATOR

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#### Aim of the session

By the end of the evening, every person in the room will have tested a word — their own or someone else's — through the four biblical tests. They will leave with a working framework for discernment they can use the rest of their lives.

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#### Before you arrive

Re-read 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22 and 1 John 4:1–6 slowly.

Pray through the words participants may bring. Some will be substantial (a calling, a marriage question). Some will be small. Be ready to hold both.

Prepare a whiteboard or large sheet of paper with the four tests written down: Scripture, Character, Fruit, Community. You will use it in the practice.

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#### Session outline (90 min)

**1. Welcome and recap (10 min)** Check in on the week. Did anyone receive something significant during the listening practice? Any hard moments? Carry forward anything unresolved from last week's identity work.

**2. Pre-read discussion (15 min)** Three questions.

*Which of the four tests is the easiest for you to apply? Which is the hardest?*

*Have you ever acted on something you thought was God and it turned out not to be? What did you do afterwards?*

*Why do you think we usually skip the Community test?*

**3. Scripture anchor — 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22 (10 min)** Read slowly. Notice the sequence Paul uses:

*Do not quench the Spirit.*

*Do not despise prophecies.*

*But test everything.*

*Hold fast what is good.*

*Abstain from every form of evil.*

Make the point: Paul refuses to let the church swing to either extreme. Do not shut down the Spirit by refusing to listen. Do not be naive by accepting everything. Test. Keep the good. Leave the rest. This is the posture of a mature community.

**4. Micro-teaching (10 min)** Walk through the four tests briefly. Do not over-teach — the reading has already done most of this. Make sure these four things are named clearly:

**Scripture test:** does it agree with the whole of the Bible?

**Character test:** does it sound like Jesus?

**Fruit test:** will it produce the fruit of the Spirit?

**Community test:** does it stand up to discernment by other trusted believers?

Write them on the wall. Leave them visible for the practice.

#### **5. Practice: test one together (35 min)**

This is the heart of the session. Do this as a whole group the first time, then split into smaller groups if you have more than eight people.

Ask: *"Who has a word they'd like the group to help test?"*

Pick one. Ideally something medium-sized — not *"I think God wants me to text my sister,"* and not *"I think God wants me to divorce my spouse."* Something in the middle. *"I think God is calling me to start a ministry to the elderly."* *"I think God told me to apply for this job."* *"I heard last week that God wants me to become a worship leader."*

Walk the group through the four tests together, out loud.

**Scripture.** Does anything in the Bible support or contradict this? Any verses come to mind? Are there Scriptures that speak to it?

**Character.** Does this sound like Jesus? Is it kind? Is it wise? Is there anything harsh or grandiose about it?

**Fruit.** If this person acted on it, what fruit might come? Peace? Joy? Panic? Pride? Courage? Service?

**Community.** What is the sense of this room? What do people hear back as they listen?

Give the person time to respond. Let the testing be genuinely discerning, not performative.

Then do one more, with a different person if time allows. Or split into twos and threes and have each person get their word tested by their group.

#### **6. Closing (10 min)**

Recap what happened. Name the practice as *normal Christian discernment* — not mystical, not scary, just what the body of Christ is meant to do together.

Between-sessions practice: every time you receive something this week, pause before you act or speak. Run the four tests mentally. If the word is significant, bring it to a trusted person.

Close in prayer. Ask for growing discernment in the group.

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## **What to watch for**

**The over-certain one.** Someone who gets defensive when their word is questioned. Gently remind them that testing is not attack. It is what Paul commanded.

**The over-cautious one.** Someone who uses the tests as an excuse to never act. Remind them that Paul's first two commands are *do not quench the Spirit* and *do not*

*despise prophecies*. Testing is in service of listening, not a replacement for it.

**The heavy word.** If someone brings a word that is significant or concerning — about a marriage, a move, a major decision — do not try to resolve it tonight. Affirm the testing as step one. Offer to follow up privately.

**A word that fails the tests.** Occasionally the group will conclude together that a word was probably not from God. Handle this with grace. Name it honestly. Affirm the person's willingness to test. This is how maturity grows.

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## Prayer prompts for the group

For a spirit of discernment that does not quench but also does not naively accept.

For humility to bring things to the body.

For courage to act on what survives testing.

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## Looking ahead

Next week is *Why We Forget — and How to Remember*. Participants should start thinking about where they currently record the words they receive. Some will have nothing. Some will have a notebook. Some will use Doxa or another app. Next week we will get practical about capture.



WEEK 4 OF 7

## SESSION 4

# Why We Forget, and How to Remember

*Recording what God says is a spiritual discipline, not a filing habit*

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### SCRIPTURE

Joshua 4:1-7

### SESSION

90 min

### PRACTICE

Record a prophecy properly — voice, date, context, Scripture.  
Stack your first stone.

## PARTICIPANT READING

## Before the session

Read this through. Come with one prophecy, promise, or significant word from God that you have received at some point in your life — even years ago. It can be a Scripture that came alive. It can be something another believer spoke. It can be a conviction you've carried. Bring it written down on a piece of paper.

## The lost discipline

There is a strange phrase in Deuteronomy 6:12. Moses is addressing the generation about to cross into the promised land — the children of slaves who are now about to inherit fields, houses, cities, vineyards. He says:

*"Then take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."*

Not *"lest you become godless."* Not *"lest you turn to idols."* The first warning, before anything else, is *lest you forget.*

Forgetting is the first thing that goes wrong. Everything else comes after.

The Bible treats remembering as a spiritual discipline on the same level as prayer and fasting. Pagans make statues. Israel makes memorials. When something significant happens with God, He commands them to build a stone pile, name a place, write it down, or tell their children. Why? Because the human heart is a leaking container. And the enemy's first strategy against any word God speaks is to wait long enough that you forget He said it.

## Why prophetic words fade

You have probably been given something by God that you can no longer remember.

That is not a failure of faith. It is a failure of capture.

Most words from God arrive in a fragile state. A sentence at a prayer meeting. A whisper while driving home. A Scripture that suddenly burned. A line another believer spoke without knowing how much it meant. If you do not record it within twenty-four hours, you will usually lose most of it within a week.

And the longer it fades, the easier it is to explain it away. *"Maybe I imagined it."* *"Maybe it wasn't that specific."* *"I'm not even sure anymore what was said."* The word that was clear on Tuesday is

blurry by Friday and gone by the following month.

This is why Habakkuk 2:2 is short and urgent:

*"Write the vision. Make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it."*

Write it. Plainly. So it can be *run with*.

---

## What Joshua did with the Jordan

After Israel crosses the Jordan on dry ground — a Red Sea moment for a new generation — God tells Joshua to do something specific. Not worship. Not teach. Not celebrate.

*"Take twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firmly, and carry them over with you." (Joshua 4:3)*

Twelve stones. One per tribe. Stacked as a memorial.

And then this, in verses 6 and 7:

*"When your children ask in time to come, 'What do these stones mean to you?' then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord... So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial for ever."*

The stones were not for their generation. The stones were for the *next* generation. For their children who had not been there. Memorials look backwards and forwards at the same time. They anchor the past for the sake of the future.

This is what recording prophecy does. It stacks stones for your future self — and for your children, literal or spiritual.

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## What to record

When you receive something from God — a word, a Scripture, a conviction, a prophecy another believer speaks over you — capture at least these things:

**The word itself.** As close to verbatim as possible. If someone is prophesying over you, record it on your phone. Ask permission. Most people will say yes.

**The date.** You will need it later when you're wondering *how long ago*.

**Where you were and what was happening.** Context matters. *"At the retreat, during the prayer time after Sunday."*

**Who spoke it, if it wasn't you.** Names matter. Say them with honour.

**Any Scripture that came with it.** Words from God are often stitched with Scripture. Record the verse references.

**What stood out.** Was there one phrase that pierced? Was there an image? Write it down while it's still warm.

Do this within twenty-four hours. Ideally within one hour. While it is still the voice in your ear, not the memory of a voice.

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## Where to keep it

A notebook works. An app works. A voice memo works. A shared document works. What matters is that it is *in one place*, that you can *find it again*, and that you can *come back to it in hard seasons*.

You will not come back to it if you have to dig through five notebooks, three journals, two apps and a Dropbox folder. Pick one place. Put everything there.

Doxa was built for this — to capture the word with the voice, the date, the Scripture, and the context, and to hand it back to you years later in the exact season you need to hear it again. It is one of several good options. What matters is that *you pick one*.

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## The discipline of returning

Recording is only half the discipline. The other half is returning.

*Dust off the journals.* Open them on a hard day. Read the words God has spoken to you over the years. Not to nostalgize. To re-enter. To remember what He said. To hand the past to the present, and through the present to the future.

This is what Paul tells Timothy to do in 1 Timothy 1:18 — *by the prophecies previously made about you*. Timothy is told to wage warfare *with* his old words. You cannot wage warfare with a word you cannot remember.

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## This week's practice

Three things.

- 1 Record one word properly.** Take the word you brought to the session. Record it — voice note, notebook, app, whatever you use. Include the date, context, Scripture, and what stood out. Do it in the way you plan to keep doing it.
  - 2 Decide your place.** Where will you keep words from God from now on? Commit to one place. Tell someone in the group. Accountability helps.
  - 3 Read one word back.** At least once this week, open your record and re-read one word God has spoken to you. Let it settle again.
- 

## Before you come to the session

Come with one word or prophecy written down — anything significant He has spoken.

## FOR THE FACILITATOR

### Aim of the session

By the end of the evening, every person in the room will have captured one word from God properly — with date, context, Scripture, and verbatim content — in whatever system they will keep using. They will leave with the beginning of a personal archive and a commitment to where words go from now on.

### Before you arrive

Bring your own record of God's words to the session. Show people what yours looks like. Leading this from an empty notebook will not work.

Have pens, small notebooks, or at least blank paper available for anyone who comes without a way to write.

Decide whether you will demonstrate Doxa in the room or not. If yes, load it on your phone. If no, be ready to suggest several options (notebook, voice memo, note-taking app, shared doc).

### Session outline (90 min)

**1. Welcome and recap (10 min)** Ask: *"What came up in your testing practice this week? Did you hold anything back that you would have spoken before?"* Keep this short.

**2. Pre-read discussion (15 min)** Three questions.

*What words from God do you remember receiving — and how many have you lost over the years?*

*Why do you think we forget so quickly?*

*Where do you currently keep the things God has said to you? Is it working?*

This third question is the important one. Most people will have scattered notes, half-filled journals, and a phone full of unfinished voice memos. Name that honestly.

**3. Scripture anchor — Joshua 4:1-7 (10 min)** Read the whole passage aloud. Then ask:

*Why does God have them take stones from the middle of the river?*

*Who are the stones for? (Not them — their children.)*

*What does this tell us about the purpose of recording what God does?*

Make the point: memorials are never primarily for the people who were there. They are for the people who come after. Recording prophecy is a generational discipline.

**4. Micro-teaching (10 min)** Three points.

**Forgetting is the first thing that goes wrong.** Deuteronomy 6:12. Moses names it before idolatry because forgetting is the doorway to everything else.

**Words fade fast.** Most prophetic words are strongest in the first hour, fading within a week. Capture changes everything.

**The discipline is not recording. The discipline is returning.** Dust off the journals. Paul tells Timothy to fight *by the prophecies previously made about you* — which assumes Timothy remembers them.

## 5. Practice: capture one properly (35 min)

Have everyone sit with their phone, notebook, or laptop.

Step one (10 min). Have each person take the word they brought and capture it fully. Coach them through it:

*Write the word itself, as close to verbatim as you can remember.*

*Write the date you received it, even if it was years ago. Your best estimate is fine.*

*Write where you were. What was happening. Who was present.*

*Note any Scripture that came with it.*

*Note the one phrase that pierced most, if there was one.*

Step two (5 min). Discuss where each person will keep it. Go around the room. Each person names their system — *"a black notebook," "the Doxa app," "a Notes file on my phone," "a shared doc with my husband."* The specific answer matters less than that they have one.

Step three (15 min, in pairs). Pair people up. Each person reads their captured word aloud to their partner. Then the partner reads it *back* to them. There is something about hearing your own recorded word spoken by another voice that settles it. Then swap.

Step four (5 min). Invite two or three to share what it was like to read back something they have been carrying quietly. Do not force this. Some words are private.

## 6. Closing (10 min)

Have everyone hold up what they wrote. Bless the capture. Pray that the words would be protected, remembered, and returned to in the years ahead.

Between-sessions practice: every time you hear something from God this week — big or small — capture it the same way. Build the habit this week while it is fresh.

Close in prayer.

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## What to watch for

**The person with nothing to bring.** Some people will come thinking they have never heard a word from God. Gently remind them that a Scripture that came alive counts. A conviction counts. An encouragement a believer gave them counts. Broaden the category for them. If they still have nothing, have them capture something that happened during week two's identity practice.

**The person with too much to bring.** Some will have forty years of journals and feel overwhelmed. Bless them. They do not need to digitise everything tonight. One word, captured well, is the point.

**The tech-resistant.** Some older believers prefer pen and paper. Do not push them to a phone app. The point is a system they will use.

**The person grieving a lost word.** Occasionally someone will realise tonight that they have lost words they can no longer recover. This can be heavy. Pray it over — God is not punished by our forgetting; He can return what we need.

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## Prayer prompts for the group

For the Holy Spirit to bring old words back to mind as He chooses.

For new words to be captured quickly and carefully going forward.

For each person's records to become stones their children can point to.

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## Looking ahead

Next week is *Love as the Test*. It is the hinge of the course. We will spend a week on 1 Corinthians 13, sitting between the gifts in chapter 12 and the prophetic practice of chapter 14. Without love as the frame, everything we've built so far goes dangerous. Prepare participants to come with one situation where they felt prophecy was used *without* love — in someone else's life or their own. It will be the worked example for week five.

● WEEK 5 OF 7



## SESSION 5

# Love as the Test

*The chapter between the gifts and the prophecy is the whole point*

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### SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 12:31 - 14:1

### SESSION

90 min

### PRACTICE

Identify one time prophecy was used without love — on you or by you. Bring it to the group.

## PARTICIPANT READING

## Before the session

Read this slowly. Bring one honest story — a time you saw or received or gave a word that was technically true but harmful. We will work with these stories in the session. You do not have to share the details publicly if you would rather not.

## Read this chapter in its real place

You have almost certainly heard 1 Corinthians 13 at a wedding. *Love is patient, love is kind, love does not envy, love does not boast.* It is beautiful. And it has been so often ripped out of context that most people do not know what chapter it is actually arguing with.

Here is the arrangement Paul wrote it in:

**Chapter 12:** A teaching on spiritual gifts. Tongues, prophecy, healing, faith, wisdom, miracles, discernment. All good. All from God.

**Chapter 13:** *Love.* The chapter without which everything in chapter 12 is noise.

**Chapter 14:** A detailed teaching on prophecy. How it should work in the church. Who should speak. How to test it. How to build up the body.

Now look at how chapter 12 ends and chapter 13 begins. There is no chapter break in Paul's letter. He wrote this as one continuous thought:

*"But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."* (1

Corinthians 12:31 – 13:1)

Paul has just finished telling them to *eagerly desire* spiritual gifts. Then he immediately warns them: if you chase these gifts without love, you will become *noise*.

Then look at how chapter 13 ends and chapter 14 begins:

*"Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy."* (1

Corinthians 14:1)

The whole of 1 Corinthians 13 is bracketed by instructions about prophecy and spiritual gifts. It is not a wedding poem. It is the frame inside which every gift — including prophecy — has to be used, or it becomes dangerous.

If you remove chapter 13, chapter 14 will hurt people.

# What gifts without love become

Paul is blunt. Gifts without love are not neutral. They do not become a slightly lower-quality version of the gift. They become *something else entirely*.

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong. If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love — I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

Three times Paul stacks the claim: tongues, prophecy, sacrifice. All things the Corinthians would have considered the marks of a serious believer. And without love, they produce:

*Noise.*

*Nothing.*

*No gain.*

Gifts without love are not small and harmless. They are loud and empty.

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## What this has to do with you

Most of us have, at some point, either given or received prophecy without love.

We have heard a word that was technically true — and it hurt, because it was not spoken in love.

We have spoken a word that was right — but our motive was to feel spiritual, or to correct someone, or to prove we still had the gift, or to be seen as the one who heard from God.

We have stood in a meeting where someone was given a *word of knowledge* that humiliated them publicly. Or where a prophetic ministry was used to control. Or where someone left crushed by something that was delivered accurately but carelessly.

Paul saw all of this at Corinth. He did not solve it by banning prophecy. He solved it by writing chapter 13.

---

## What love actually looks like

The fifteen verbs of 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 are not sentiment. They are diagnostic. Run them across any word you are about to speak, and ask:

*Is it patient?* Is this person ready to hear it? Am I willing to say it more than once, over years, if they are not?

*Is it kind?* Is there warmth in the way I will deliver this?

*Is it free of envy?* Am I speaking into this person's life because I love them, or because I resent them?

*Is it free of boasting?* Is this about them hearing God, or about me being seen to have heard?

*Is it free of pride?* Am I above them as I speak, or alongside them?

*Is it honouring?* Will this leave them with dignity?

*Is it self-seeking?* What do I gain from saying this? If I gain nothing, that is a good sign.

*Is it free of irritation?* Am I speaking out of frustration?

*Does it keep no record of wrongs?* Am I dredging up their past, or speaking God's word over their future?

*Does it rejoice with the truth — not in evil?* Is this about building them up, or exposing them?

*Does it bear, believe, hope, endure?* Can I stay with this person long after I speak this?

If the word passes these tests, it is carried by love. If it does not, Paul says plainly: do not speak it. It will be noise.

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## The hard version of this

Love is not niceness. Paul is not telling the Corinthians to only ever say pleasant things.

Prophecy can be correcting. Prophecy can be confrontational. The prophets of the Old Testament were often delivering hard, exposing, difficult truths to kings and nations. Nathan confronted David. Jeremiah wept. Isaiah stripped off his clothes and walked naked for three years as a sign against Egypt.

None of it was nice. All of it was love.

The test is not whether the word is comfortable. The test is whether it is delivered with a heart that is *for* the person and *for* the kingdom — not against them.

A hard word spoken in love can set someone free. A soft word spoken without love can still wound.

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## Why this matters for the rest of the course

Next week is *Speaking It Well*. We are going to practice prophesying to one another.

Before we do that, we have to settle this week. Because if we walk into week six without love as the floor, we will turn the room into Corinth on its bad days. People speaking words they have not tested, motivated by what looks spiritual rather than what is loving, producing noise.

Love is not one test among four. Love is the context inside which all four tests happen.

# The practice for this week

Two things.

- 1 Think honestly about one time prophecy was used without love — on you or by you.** Write it down. What did it do? What was missing? What would have changed if love had been the frame?
- 2 Identify one person in your life you could speak an encouraging word to this week.** Before you speak, pray the fifteen verbs over your own heart. Then speak it.

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## Before you come to the session

Bring one honest story of prophecy without love. You will not be forced to share specifics.

Come ready to practice being *for* people before you are *about* prophesying to them.

### FOR THE FACILITATOR

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#### Aim of the session

By the end of the evening, every person in the room will have acknowledged at least one time love was missing from a prophetic moment — received or given — and will have prayed 1 Corinthians 13 over their own heart as the floor for next week's practice. This is the hinge week. Do not skip it or shrink it.

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#### Before you arrive

Read 1 Corinthians 12:31 – 14:1 in one sitting. Do not stop at the chapter breaks. Paul didn't put them there.

Read the participant material twice.

Think honestly about your own history. Where have you used prophecy without love? Where has it been used on you? You will lead better from a place of honesty than a place of being above it.

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#### Session outline (90 min)

**1. Welcome and recap (10 min)** Check in on the capture practice from last week. Has anyone started their record? Keep it brief.

**2. Pre-read discussion (15 min)** Three questions.

*When have you received a word that was technically true but hurt because it was not spoken in love?*

*When have you spoken a word whose motive, if you are honest, was not purely love?*

*Paul puts love between the gifts and the prophecy. What do you think happens when you remove that middle chapter?*

Let this be honest. Silence is okay. This is not a sharing performance.

### 3. Scripture anchor — 1 Corinthians 12:31 – 14:1 (15 min)

This is the longest Scripture reading in the course. Do not shortcut it. Read the whole passage out loud, without chapter breaks, start to finish.

After you finish, ask:

*What surprises you about hearing it as one continuous argument?*

*Where does chapter 13 start, really? (Chapter 12 verse 31 — "a still more excellent way.")*

*What does Paul say gifts without love become? (Noise. Nothing. No gain.)*

Point out the bracket. 12:31 and 14:1 are the same instruction — *eagerly desire the gifts*.

Chapter 13 is the qualifier inside the instruction.

### 4. Micro-teaching (10 min) Three points.

**Chapter 13 was not written for weddings.** It was written for a church with real prophetic activity. It is a correction, not a poem.

**Gifts without love become something else.** Not a weaker version. An entirely different thing — noise, nothing, no gain.

**Love is not niceness.** Prophecy can be confrontational. The test is whether you are *for* the person, not whether the word is comfortable.

### 5. Practice: the fifteen verbs and one honest story (35 min)

Part one (10 min, private). Have everyone pull out what they brought — one time prophecy was used without love. On paper, have each person answer:

What was the word?

What was missing? (Name the specific love verb that was absent.)

What would have changed if love had been the frame?

Part two (15 min, in pairs). Pair people up. Each person shares as much of their story as they want. The partner listens. Then the partner prays a simple prayer over them:

*"God, for what was said without love over [name], I ask You to heal what it broke. I bless [name] with the truth of what You actually say about them."*

Swap. Same prayer.

Part three (10 min, whole group). Read 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 aloud slowly, one phrase at a time. After each phrase, pause. Let it land. Invite anyone to say out loud: *"I want this to be the floor of how I speak for God."*

### 6. Closing (10 min)

Recap: this is the hinge. Everything before today was about hearing. Everything after today is about speaking. And the floor of all of it is love.

Between-sessions practice: pray 1 Corinthians 13 over your own heart every day this week. Use it as a check before you speak. Look for one person to give a word of genuine, loving encouragement to before next week.

Close in prayer. Bless the room to be people who speak *from* love, not past it.

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## What to watch for

**The one with a painful story.** Some people will have been genuinely wounded by prophecy misused in their past. Tonight may surface it. Allow it to surface. Pray healing, not correction.

**The one who wants to defend their history.** Some people have built a prophetic ministry that may not have been fully in love. If someone gets defensive tonight, do not argue. Let Paul do the work. Move on. The Holy Spirit finishes what He starts.

**The cynic.** Someone in the room may have decided years ago that prophecy was mostly harm. This session is for them. Do not push them to agree. Let the chapter speak.

**The performer.** If someone uses the testimony time to display their own spiritual maturity, gently redirect. This is not a show.

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## Prayer prompts for the group

For every word of condemnation or manipulation that has been spoken under the label of prophecy, to be healed.

For love to be the primary mark of this group's prophetic practice.

For the fifteen verbs to be formed in each person before they are spoken through them.

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## Looking ahead

Next week is *Speaking It Well*. We will practice prophesying to one another in pairs and small groups. Tonight's love work is what makes next week safe. Remind participants that week six is a practice session — they should come ready to give and receive a word.

● WEEK 6 OF 7



## SESSION 6

# Speaking It Well

*Prophesying in love for the building up of the body*

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### SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 14:1-5, 24-33

### SESSION

90 min

### PRACTICE

Give at least one encouraging prophetic word in the group, received in love.

## PARTICIPANT READING

## Before the session

Read this through. Come ready to give and receive a word. Do not overthink it — the whole course has been building toward this evening.

## Prophecy is for three things

Paul gives us the brief for prophecy in the church in one sentence. It is worth memorising.

*"The one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation."* (1 Corinthians 14:3)

Three purposes. That is the whole scope.

**Upbuilding.** Making someone stronger than they were. Giving them Scripture, truth, vision for who God says they are.

**Encouragement.** Putting courage back in someone. Breathing into a flame that is fading. Reminding them they are not alone.

**Consolation.** Comforting a grief. Speaking peace into a hard place. Meeting someone in their sorrow with a word from God.

Upbuilding, encouragement, consolation. That is the brief. You will not go wrong if you stay inside it.

What prophecy is *not* for, according to Paul:

Predicting when someone is going to die.

Telling someone who to marry.

Exposing someone's sin in public.

Impressing people.

Telling the future for the sake of spectacle.

Controlling other people.

If a word you are about to speak is not inside *upbuilding, encouragement, consolation*, pause. Test it again. It may still be from God. But the threshold for speaking it is much higher.

# A simple posture for speaking

When you have received something you believe God wants you to speak to someone, try this posture.

**1. Speak tentatively.** You are not an Old Testament prophet with *"thus saith the Lord"* authority. You are a New Testament believer participating in the gift. Say: *"I think God might be saying,"* or *"This could be from God; take it to Him,"* or *"I sense He is showing me —"*. Tentative does not mean uncertain. It means humble.

**2. Speak briefly.** Most prophetic words should be under a minute. If you find yourself five minutes in, you are probably preaching, counselling, or projecting.

**3. Speak from Scripture where you can.** The best prophetic words are stitched with Scripture. Quote the verse. It gives the word weight that your own voice cannot carry.

**4. Speak to the person.** Not to the room. Not to the leader. Not to impress. Turn, look at them, speak to them.

**5. Speak, then stop.** When the word is given, stop. Resist the urge to elaborate. Give the person space to receive.

**6. Hand it over.** After you have spoken, say something like *"Take that to God. Test it. Keep what comes alive."* This reminds them — and you — that discernment belongs to them.

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## Receiving a word

Receiving is its own practice. Most people are so nervous about whether what they are about to hear is right that they forget to actually listen.

When someone is about to speak a word over you:

**Settle.** Slow your breathing. You are not being x-rayed. You are being blessed.

**Listen fully.** Do not start rehearsing a response. Let it land.

**Receive with your body.** Many people close their eyes, or bow their heads, or hold out their hands. A small posture of receiving helps.

**Thank the person.** Whatever you received, thank them for risking.

**Test later, not immediately.** Do not reject a word in the moment. You cannot hear clearly while your defences are up. Take it home. Write it down. Sit with it for a few days. Run it through the four tests from week three. Keep what survives.

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## What to do with a word that does not land

Sometimes a word will be spoken over you that you cannot receive. It does not fit who you are. It does not line up with Scripture. It feels off.

That is fine. It happens. The one who spoke is not infallible. You are not required to believe every word spoken over you.

The most gracious response is: *"Thank you. I'm going to take that to God and test it."* That is all. You do not need to correct the person in the room. You do not need to make a scene. You take it home, you test it, and you set aside what was not Him.

But — and this matters — do not reject a word simply because it is uncomfortable. Some of the best words God has ever given you will feel uncomfortable, because they are calling you into something larger than your current life. Discomfort is not disqualification. Distortion is.

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## Common mistakes, gently named

If you have been around prophetic practice for a while, you will have seen these. Name them privately in yourself before the session.

**The word that is really advice.** You know what you think the person should do. You are now presenting it as *"God is saying."* Stop.

**The word that is really envy.** You resent this person. The word sounds like a correction. It is probably your resentment.

**The word that is really self-promotion.** You liked being the one who heard. You want to be the one who heard again. Stop.

**The word that is really a sermon.** You want to teach. Teaching is a different gift. Teach when you are teaching; prophesy when you are prophesying. Do not collapse the two.

**The word that is really too vague to help.** *"I sense God loves you"* is lovely but not really prophetic. Be as specific as you have been given. No more, no less.

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## What this session will look like

Tonight is a practice session. You will be paired up and given time to listen for God on behalf of each other. Then you will speak what you have received. Then receive what is spoken to you. Then swap partners and do it again.

The ground rules are simple, and they come straight from Paul:

Upbuilding, encouragement, consolation. Nothing else.

Spoken in love. (1 Corinthians 13 is the floor.)

Tested before spoken. (Four tests from week three.)

Brief. Scriptural where possible. Handed back to the person to test.

This is New Testament prophecy. Simple, loving, tested, shared.

# Before you come to the session

Come having prayed 1 Corinthians 13 over your own heart this week.

Come expecting to hear something for someone else in the room, even a short sentence.

Come expecting to receive a word from someone else. Bring a pen — you will want to write down what is spoken over you.

## FOR THE FACILITATOR

### Aim of the session

By the end of the evening, every person in the room will have given at least one prophetic word to another person in the group, received one, and captured what they received in writing. This is the practical session the whole course has been building toward. Do not shrink it.

### Before you arrive

Spend significant personal time listening for God about each person in the group before the session. Many facilitators have found that God gives them a word for each person during the week — carry those as a reserve, but do not rely on them exclusively. The group needs to practice, not receive from you only.

Re-read 1 Corinthians 14:1-5, 24-33.

Prepare the room. Chairs facing inward, not theatre-style. Pens and paper for everyone.

### Session outline (90 min)

#### 1. Welcome and prayer (10 min)

Open with a longer prayer than usual. This is a practice night. Invite the Holy Spirit clearly. Ask for the fifteen verbs of 1 Corinthians 13 to be the floor of what happens in the room. Bless every person to hear and to speak.

**2. Pre-read refresh (10 min)** Read aloud 1 Corinthians 14:3 together. *"The one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation."*

Ask briefly:

*What three things is prophecy for?*

*What did you notice in the reading about receiving a word?*

Keep this tight. The teaching was in the pre-read. Tonight is for practice.

#### 3. Brief coaching (10 min)

Before the practice, remind them of the six-step posture:

**1** Speak tentatively. *"I think God might be saying..."*

**2** Speak briefly. Under a minute where possible.

**3** Speak from Scripture where you can.

**4** Speak to the person, not to the room.

**5** Speak, then stop. No elaboration.

Also remind them of the three ground rules:

Upbuilding, encouragement, consolation only.

In love. (Last week is the floor.)

Tested before spoken.

Take one minute to pray the room silent. Let the Spirit settle over what is about to happen.

#### 4. Practice — Round One (25 min)

Pair people up. Simple instructions:

*You have ten minutes. In silence, ask God for something for the person in front of you. Write down anything that comes — a word, a Scripture, a picture, a phrase, a sentence. Do not edit. Just capture.*

*After ten minutes, partner A speaks what they have received to partner B. Brief. Tentative. Loving. Partner B receives — eyes soft, receiving posture, writing it down.*

*Then partner B speaks to partner A. Same way.*

*Thank each other. No commentary. Move on.*

Walk the room quietly while this is happening. If you see a pair stuck or struggling, sit in with them briefly. Do not interrupt pairs that are working.

#### 5. Practice — Round Two (20 min)

Re-pair everyone. New partners. Same format, but this round aim for slightly shorter — 7 minutes listening, then speaking. By round two, people are more comfortable.

Encourage them: *"Even one sentence is enough. You do not need to produce a paragraph. A word, a Scripture, a phrase — that is prophecy."*

#### 6. Closing (15 min)

Gather the room.

Invite three or four people to share what they received. Not what they gave. What they received. Let them read it aloud if they wrote it down. Bless it.

Ask: *"What was hardest?"* Let a few honest answers land. Common ones: the fear of being wrong, the worry of sounding spiritual, the surprise of how much came.

Remind them: what was spoken tonight is *not* infallible. Test it. Sit with it. Keep what comes alive. Set aside what does not.

Close by reading 1 Corinthians 14:3 aloud, together if possible. *"The one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation."*

Close in prayer. Bless the room to keep doing this for the rest of their lives.

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## What to watch for

**The one who hears nothing.** Some people will sit in the ten minutes and feel they heard nothing. Have them offer a Scripture they sense for their partner instead. A Scripture spoken in love is a word.

**The word that goes sideways.** Occasionally someone will speak a word that is not encouraging — that slips toward correction or prediction. Gently intervene. Thank the

person for their honesty. Redirect to *upbuilding, encouragement, consolation*. This is part of learning.

**The overwhelmed receiver.** Some people will be undone by what is spoken over them. Let the tears come. Have tissues. Do not rush the moment.

**The sceptic.** Some people will come in sceptical and leave changed tonight. Others will remain unsure. Do not force a conclusion. God is not offended by a slow yes.

**The performer.** Rare, but it happens. If someone launches into an elaborate "*thus saith the Lord*" performance, gently coach them back to brief, tentative, loving. You are not silencing them. You are training them.

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## Prayer prompts for the group

That the fear of being wrong would not silence the voice of the Spirit in them.

That every person would hear something spoken over them tonight that they will still be carrying in five years.

That the room would become a community that speaks encouragement as naturally as it breathes.

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## Looking ahead

Next week is the last. *Carrying the Fire Forward*. It is about taking what has been built in this room and making it part of your church, your home, your small group rhythm. Ask participants to come ready to commit to one practice they will carry forward after the course ends.



● WEEK 7 OF 7

## SESSION 7

# Carrying the Fire Forward

*Building a culture of remembering in your church, small group, and home*

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### SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

### SESSION

90 min

### PRACTICE

Commit to one ongoing practice. Pair with one person in the group for accountability.

## PARTICIPANT READING

## Before the session

Read this. Come ready to commit to one practice you will carry forward into the rest of your life — not something ambitious that you will abandon in four weeks, but something small and sustainable.

## Where this course has brought you

Look back over seven weeks.

Week one you sat in silence and asked if God would speak. Week two you let Him name you. Week three you learned to test what you hear. Week four you captured a word properly for the first time. Week five you let love become the floor. Week six you spoke a word into someone's life and received one into yours.

You have moved from *I don't know if God speaks to me* to *I have heard, tested, recorded, and given a word from God*.

That is not a small arc.

But here is the honest part: almost every small group that has ever done a course on prophecy, or hearing God, or spiritual gifts, has fallen back into silence within a few months of finishing. Not because the course failed. Because nothing was built to *carry the fire forward*.

This week is about making sure this does not end when we stop meeting.

## What a culture of remembering looks like

When Moses is preparing Israel to enter the promised land, he gives them a passage they will still be reciting thousands of years later — the *Shema*:

*"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 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. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."* (Deuteronomy 6:4–9)

This is a culture, not an event. A rhythm of remembering that runs through the ordinary hours of a life. When you sit, when you walk, when you lie down, when you rise. In the house. On the

road. On the body. On the doorposts.

A culture of remembering is the normal environment of a family that belongs to God. Not a conference once a year. A rhythm that the children absorb simply by being present.

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## What this looks like for you

You cannot build a whole culture overnight. But you can build small rhythms that compound.

### In your own life:

A place where words from God are kept. One place. Doxa, a notebook, a document. Commit.

A weekly rhythm of return. Once a week, open what is kept and re-read something. Ten minutes.

A daily listening time. Even five minutes. Ask a question. Write what comes.

An annual review. Every January, read back over the words from the previous year. Mark what has come true. Mark what you are still waiting on.

### In your small group or church:

*Encouragement at the table.* Every time you gather, leave room for someone to offer a word of encouragement to someone else. Even two minutes.

*Testimony moments.* Ask regularly: "Where has God been faithful lately?" Not "What is a struggle?" Both questions matter. The second is asked constantly. The first, rarely.

*Stones stacked.* When something significant happens — a healing, a breakthrough, a fulfilment of a long word — name it out loud in the room. Put it in the group record. Make it visible for the ones coming after.

*Prophetic practice continues.* Do not stop practicing just because the course is over. Keep pairing up. Keep speaking short encouraging words to each other in the rhythm of normal life.

### In your home:

*Around the table.* Once a week, ask your family the same question. "Where have you seen God this week?" Start when the children are young. Do it for the rest of your life.

*When things are hard.* Read back the words God has spoken over your family in past seasons. Remind each other. This is what Deuteronomy 6 actually looks like.

*Teach your children to listen.* Children hear God. Do not patronise them. Ask them what they sense. Write down what they say. Their simple words are often more piercing than yours.

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## What to guard against

A few things kill a culture of remembering before it begins.

**Perfectionism.** You do not need to do this beautifully. You need to do this repeatedly. A messy, consistent practice beats a polished, abandoned one every time.

**The big launch.** Do not announce to your church that you are *starting a new prophetic culture*. Just start doing it. Slowly. Quietly. It will spread by gravity.

**Spiritual performance.** The second any of this becomes a show — who heard the best word, who has the most prophecies recorded, who sounds most spiritual — it is dead. Keep it small, private, and in love.

**One-off energy.** If you only come back to this when you feel like it, it will fade. Build it into the ordinary rhythms — the sitting, walking, lying down, rising of Deuteronomy 6 — not the extraordinary ones.

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## What the end of this course actually is

The end of this course is a beginning.

You have been given, over seven weeks, the foundational tools of a normal Christian life in the Spirit. You know how to hear. You know how to test. You know how to record. You know how to speak in love. You know what a culture of remembering looks like.

What comes next is decades of practicing these in the ordinary hours of your life. Quietly. With love. For the building up of your family, your small group, your church, and eventually the children and spiritual grandchildren who come after you.

The stones are not for your generation. They are for the ones who will come to this table after you are gone, and ask: *what do these stones mean?*

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## The practice for the rest of your life

One practice, chosen tonight. Small enough to sustain. Specific enough to actually do.

Some options:

*Five minutes of listening silence every morning before checking my phone.*

*Weekly review of my Doxa record on Sunday afternoon.*

*One encouraging word to one person every week — texted, spoken, or prayed over them.*

*A weekly family table question: where has God been faithful this week?*

*A monthly phone call with a trusted friend to test what I have been hearing.*

*Joining a weekly prayer group that makes space for listening.*

Pick one. Tell the group. Commit to six months.

# Before you come to the last session

Come with one practice chosen and ready to commit to out loud.

Come with the name of one person in the group you will pair with for the first six months — one check-in every two weeks, asking each other *"what have you heard? what have you spoken?"*

Bring your record. Bring your notes. Bring everything you have built over seven weeks. We will close with thanksgiving.

## FOR THE FACILITATOR

### Aim of the session

By the end of the evening, every person in the room will have committed to one specific on-going practice, paired with a partner for six months of accountability, and blessed the others at the table. This session closes the course well.

### Before you arrive

Re-read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 slowly.

Think carefully about each person in the group. Where has each of them grown over seven weeks? Plan to name it over them tonight, one by one.

Prepare something simple — bread, wine or juice, something shared. This is a thanksgiving session. The body eats together when it gives thanks.

### Session outline (90 min)

#### 1. Welcome and recap (10 min)

Tonight feels different. Name it. You have spent seven weeks together. The room has changed.

Open with thanks. Invite two or three people to share one thing they received or learned across the course.

#### 2. Pre-read discussion (10 min) Two questions.

*What is one rhythm you already have — in your life, family, or group — that helps you remember what God has said?*

*What is one rhythm you know is missing?*

#### 3. Scripture anchor — Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (10 min) Read aloud. Slowly. Twice if helpful.

Ask:

*What does Moses assume about how remembering happens? (In the ordinary hours — sitting, walking, lying down, rising.)*

*Who is this culture ultimately for? (The next generation.)*

Make the point: a culture of remembering is an environment, not an event. It is something your children — biological or spiritual — absorb by being around it.

#### 4. Practice — commitments and partners (40 min)

Part one (15 min, silent). Have each person answer three questions on paper:

*What is one practice I will commit to for the next six months?*

*Who in this group will I ask to be my partner for check-ins every two weeks?*

*What is one specific commitment I am making about my home, my family, or my small group? (For example: starting a weekly table question, a monthly review, a group record.)*

Part two (25 min, around the circle). One person at a time. Each person stands or sits in the middle of the group and:

- 1 Names their practice out loud.
- 2 Names their partner and asks them *"will you walk with me in this for six months?"*  
Partner says yes.
- 3 The rest of the group blesses them by name. The facilitator leads — speak one specific thing you have seen in this person over the seven weeks. *"I've watched you move from silence to confidence. I've seen you become more willing to listen than to talk. I've seen the Lord shape you."* Others in the room add one sentence.
- 4 Short prayer over the person. Move to the next.

Do not rush this. If you have twelve people, this alone can take twenty-five to thirty minutes. That is fine. It is the heart of the session.

#### 5. Closing — thanksgiving (15 min)

Bring out what you prepared — bread, cup, whatever you chose.

Read aloud Psalm 78:4, *"We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonders that He has done."*

Share in whatever way is appropriate for your tradition — communion, an agape meal, simply breaking bread and passing the cup as thanksgiving. Give thanks for what God has done in the room over seven weeks.

#### 6. Final commissioning (5 min)

Stand together. Pray this, or something like it:

*"Father, thank You for speaking to us. Thank You for the seven weeks You have carried us through. Let us leave this room people who hear You, test what we hear, record what You say, speak it in love, and build a culture of remembering in our homes, our small groups, and our churches. Let what has begun here not end here. In Jesus' name, amen."*

Send them out.

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## What to watch for

**The one who wants to commit to too much.** Gently coach them smaller. A sustained small practice beats a dramatic abandoned one.

**The one who cannot decide.** Have a short list ready to offer. Sometimes decision fatigue is the block.

**The one who has no partner in the room.** Quietly ensure everyone is paired. No one leaves without a partner.

**Emotion.** Closing sessions often surface tears. Let them. Do not rush.

## After the session

Consider:

A one-month follow-up gathering to check in on commitments. Not a whole new course. A one-off.

A private document or record that the group keeps together of words spoken across the seven weeks. Stones stacked.

An invitation to run the course again, with new participants, led by someone from this cohort. The fire spreads by people who have walked through the fire themselves.

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## Prayer prompts for the group

That the practices committed to tonight would outlast the initial energy.

That each person would become a small fire in their own home and circle.

That what has begun in this room would spread quietly, by gravity, not by announcement.

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## Closing note to the facilitator

You have led a group of people through something that will shape the rest of their lives. Sit with that for a moment. Then give thanks.

If you would like to continue their formation, consider moving them into course two —

*Promise to Promised Land* — which is built for the messy middle of the prophetic journey.

Some groups run the two back-to-back with a four-week break in between. Others wait six months. Either works.

*"Speak, Lord. Your servant  
hears."*

1 SAMUEL 3:10