

BIG IDEA SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Small groups that focus on the Big Idea for the week can use this guide to apply the message to life and take action. Feel free to use whatever parts of this guide best fit your group personality and time frame. All verses, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version (NIV).

11.8/9.08 // So, You Want to Hear from God?

The question we really have to ask is, "Am I listening?"

// Ice Breaker _____

Option 1: When you were young, did you feel like "grown-ups" didn't listen to you? Now that you're older, do you feel like the youth don't understand the advice you give them?

Option 2: Have you ever had to follow instructions from something you bought that said, "some assembly required"? Did you follow the instructions and if not, what happened?

// Questions for Discussion _____

When you are clearly wrong for not listening, where do you place the blame? (Be honest)

God speaks to us through nature. It's called "natural revelation." What does He say to us through the natural world? Read these verses:

Psalms 19:1—The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Romans 1:20 - For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

What are some ways God spoke to people in the past? Read these verses:

Genesis 3:9 - But the LORD God called to [Adam], "Where are you?"
Genesis 18:1-2, 9-10 - The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre.... Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. ..."Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There, in the tent," he said. Then the LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son."
Genesis 20:3 - But God came to Abimelech in a dream one night and said to him, "You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman."
Exodus 3:2 - There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.
Acts 10:10, 13 - [Peter] ...fell into a trance. ...Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."
Acts 12:8 - Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so.

How does He primarily speak to us today? Read these verses:

Hebrews 1:1-2 - ...In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son....
Acts 2:42 - [The first Christians] devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching..

How do you know for sure when you've heard from God? What is the evidence? How do you know it's not just your own subjective thoughts, or someone else's thoughts? What is the objective standard by which we know God has spoken? When is it presumptuous to say, "God spoke to me..."? * "Prophecy" = speaking direct revelation from God. Read these verses:

1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 - ...Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 - ...We ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way....

1 John 2:24 - See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father.

1 John 4:1 - Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

How do you know when God's "given you a sign"? Is it proper to ask for a sign, or is it putting God to the test?

What's the difference between "hearing" and "listening"? What does Jesus mean when he makes these kinds of statements?

Mark 4:9 - Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Matthew 13:15-16 - "For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. ... But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear...."

Read these 2 incidents and think about what you would do—would you have "listened"? In Matthew 4, Peter and his brother, Andrew, did listen:

¹⁹"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰At once they left their nets and followed him.

Later in Matthew 16 a man did not listen:

²¹Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." ²²When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

The question we really have to ask is, "Am I really listening?"

James 1:22 - Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

What part of God's Word are you not doing? What part do you need to do? Do you need to spend more time in God's Word? Did you really focus on the weekend message? What can you do this week to improve?

// Prayer _____

Pray that God reveals His plan for your life and that you listen and follow.

// Dig Deeper _____

This section is for those who want to do some extra study on their own.

Throughout the Bible there are examples of people, and even nations, that did not listen to God. Read some of the examples, and the results of not listening:

Command: Genesis 2: ¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

Disobeyed: Ate from the tree.

Results: Genesis 3: ¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." ¹⁷ To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

Command: Exodus 16: ¹⁵ Moses said to them, "It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Each one is to gather as much as he needs...' " ¹⁹ Then Moses said to them, "No one is to keep any of it until morning."

Disobeyed: Some kept part until morning.

Results: ²⁰ ...but it was full of maggots and began to smell.

Command: Numbers 20: ⁷ The LORD said to Moses, ⁸ "Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink."

Disobeyed: Moses struck the rock.

Results: ¹² But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."

What other examples were there of people and nations that did not listen to God? List them, and the rewards for those that did listen.