

Seven Special Days - a toolkit that helps us use time for listening together.



This small booklet is designed to guide us through the days of Holy Week as we seek to listen to God as a Church. As we start to do this we should be expectant and excited. We do not need to be hesitant or unsure of whether God will speak to us – He has made quite clear to us in Scripture that He will. We only have to look at the passages in Numbers and in the Books of Genesis and Revelation to see that the Bible both begins and ends with God speaking to us.

We can grow in our capacity to hear God – we may get it wrong sometimes but we will hear according to our faith, as Romans 12:6 makes clear. A toddler will never walk unless he is prepared to fall a few times on the way and therefore as Christians we need to be open to errors of judgment as we endeavour to seek to grow closer to God.

Over the coming pages you will be introduced to various ways of listening to God and over the seven days of Holy Week I would encourage you to use this little booklet each day to seek God.

Monday 6th April - An expectant heart

I come to pray. What do I expect and how might I increase my expectation?

My thoughts and reactions

St. John 15: 5-15 *I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me my words abide in you. Ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As my Father has loved me so I love you. Abide in my love and if you keep my commandments you will abide in my love just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and your joy may be full. This is my commandment. That you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no-one than this that someone lays down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants for the servant does not know what the master is doing. But I call you friends for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.*

As a result of today's study, what might God be saying to you and to others in our fellowship?

Tuesday 7th April – hearing God through scripture

2 Timothy 3: 15-17

And how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness That the man of God may be competent and equipped for every good work.

Today we will hear that God speaks through scripture.

The book of Isaiah reminds us that God speaks to us.

Today we will consider why we need to hear God through scripture but we also need to consider why we don't hear God – what are the obstacles – is it our own subconscious reading of the text – is it the day we have had, the challenges that have confronted us?

What are the things that spoke to you last time you read the bible?

What are the things that spoke to you during a service in Church?

When was the last time you had a conversation outside the Church or during bible reading when you believe God spoke to you?

Please read Romans 8:35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, distress, persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written, for your sake we are being killed all day long we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Here, Paul makes clear that God's love is over-arching and indestructible. Read the passage three times, slowly and without taking a break and then write in the box below the words that speak to you and why they speak to you. Please also write down your thoughts and reactions to how God has spoken to you through this reading. Please then read Isaiah 55: 2, 3 10 and 11. What is God saying to you or to our fellowship?

Wednesday 8th April – hearing God through each other

Perhaps hearing God speak to you through your friends is a very common experience. However, whatever your experience I hope you have an expectation that you will hear God through your fellow Christians over the next few weeks, months and years. They will speak on a Sunday or encourage others at a timely moment; they offer advice which is challenging or people say things which resonate with your inner-being. All these can be moments when God speaks to you. Therefore, we need to listen to each other carefully so as to make sure that we always respond in an appropriate way.

Matthew 28: 18 - 20

And Jesus came to them and said all authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me. God therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you and behold I am with you always to the end of the age.

Is any of the work set out in the above passage possible without people speaking?

How do I hear God speak through other people?

What might this be saying to me and other members of the Church community?

Thursday 9th April – hearing God in the community

Sunday services at 8, 9.30, 10 and/or 11 and 3 and/or 6, Home groups, Lunch Club – these are all times we have an opportunity of hearing God through the community of our Church and the wider community that comes in to share with us. In Luke 10: 29-37 we hear about neighbours. Neighbours can be God's way of speaking to us through the community in which we live. As you go around the villages in our Benefice and our workplaces, which are unique communities, do you have conversations where God allows Himself to be revealed? Can I challenge you today to spend some time walking through, around or near your home, or even just sitting praying looking out of your window – praying with other Christians that live near you and praying for the communities in which you live that God might speak?

Now fill in the box below:

God, this is what I saw.

God, this is what I had the chance to say.

God, these are the people you laid upon my heart to pray for.

What does this mean for me and/or for our fellowship?

Friday 10th April – hearing God through prophetic gifts

1 Corinthians 14: 1 tells us to follow the way of love and eagerly desire the spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.

Prophecy is the way in which God sometimes speaks directly to His people. It can be for encouragement, special times or special events. It can also be a warning. We do not know when or how God will speak. It may be spoken by anybody, husband, wife, adult or child. It needs to be tested, when it is heard, by other prophetic Christians. Prophecy can take many different forms. It can take the form of prophecy described in Acts 11: 27-30, words of knowledge described in Acts 13: 2, revelation as in Acts 14:26, pictures as in Acts 10: 9-20 and through preaching as in Acts 4:8.

As in 1 Corinthians 14: 26-33 we are encouraged to build up our spiritual gifts in the context of the up-building of fellowship, please set out below a verse, song or particular part of our liturgy which is an encouragement to you, or perhaps where a word from you has been an encouragement to others. Please write it down and remember it. What might God be saying to you through this word and His action through you or the other person for the life of our Church?

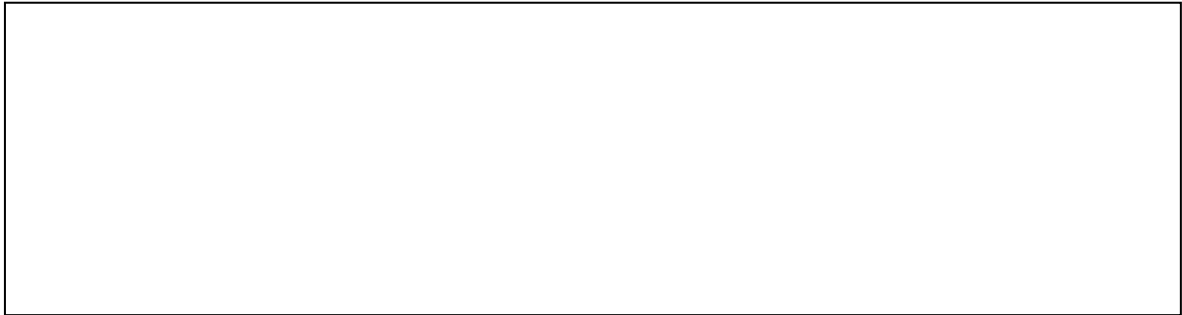
Saturday 11th April – hearing God through your heart's desire

This may seem an unexpected subject for our final day before Easter Sunday. As Christians, we may more readily associate our desires with our fallen and sinful nature, not with something potentially good or God-given. Of course, there is much in scripture about renouncing the desires of the flesh (Romans 12: 14) clothing yourself in the Lord Jesus and not thinking about gratifying our sinful bodies. But today I want you to consider your heart. The very deepest place of your being – the place God created. Desires of the heart are the very key in all the major decisions we make, whether to follow the Lord wholeheartedly or half-heartedly or to reject Him. Sadly, many Christians live as older sons (see Luke 15: 11-32 – the parable of the Prodigal Son). So, today consider the desires of your heart. *Take delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart* (Psalm 37: 4).

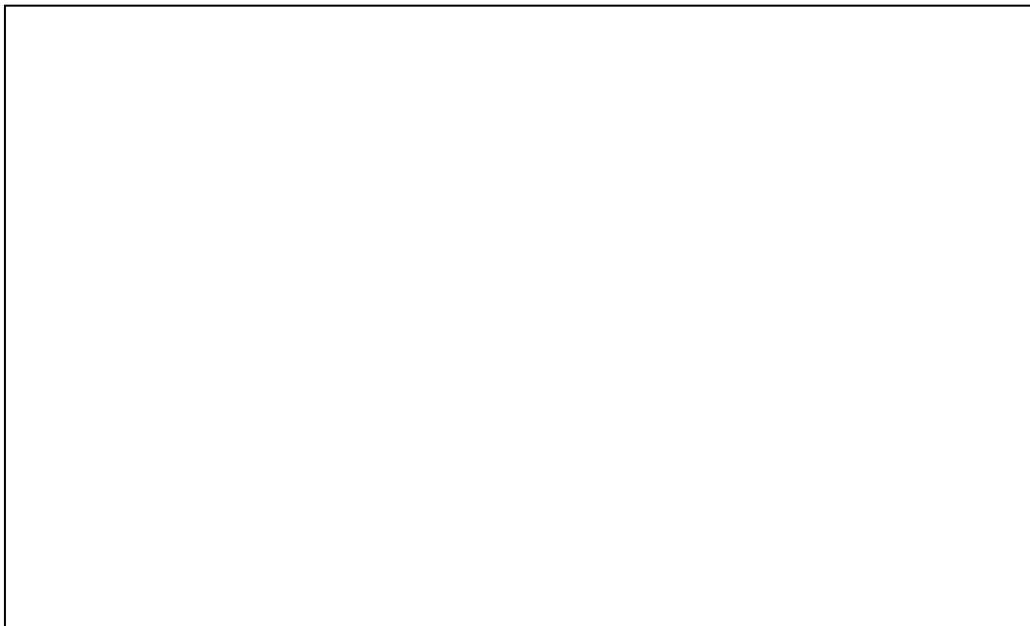
Desire can be associated with sin and danger. A heart's desire is much deeper than our impulses and what we are feeling. It is not just about the desires of our flesh – desires are an expression of who we are – they are precious and God-given. Because we are afraid of being disappointed, we often don't acknowledge our heart's desires even to ourselves, so we need the help of the Holy Spirit to unlock us.

Spend some time praying and reflecting on your life and ask the question, "What are my deepest desires?" Then write them down in the box below and how they might find

expression in your life and bring glory to God. Don't be afraid to dream dreams.



Also, read Luke 15: 11-13. What are the desires of the younger son and do you think he eventually achieves his desires?



On Easter Sunday, please bring along this sheet and place it in the box provided in your church.

These are my over-arching experiences of God speaking to me in Holy Week.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their over-arching experiences of God speaking to them in Holy Week.