

LISTENING FOR MISSION: CELL NOTES

Session 1 – 360 degree listening

WELCOME

Tell the group about someone you know who is a really good listener. How has their good listening made a difference to you?

WORSHIP

Praise God for listening to us and make some time to listen to him. For example, use the words which Eli told Samuel to say to God, “Speak Lord, your servant is listening” Then play some quiet music and seek to receive anything God might want to show you. As you engage with the dvd and bible tonight ask God what he is saying to you for your situation.

WORD

Listening is part of loving.

As Christians, we are called to...

- Listen to God through prayer
- Listen to our Church and its traditions
- Listen to people their hopes fears, needs and joys
- Listen to and be aware of ourselves – our feelings and experiences

This is sometimes called 360 degree listening because we are listening all around.

Watch the story of Taste and See on the Expressions DVD 1 (There is a copy at the Rectory or you can borrow from the MSM course) Pool your ideas on how listening in different directions plays a part in the story.

Look at the story of Jesus in Luke 2.46. What exactly does Jesus do here?

Make a list of examples from the Old and New Testaments of people listening/ researching before embarking on something God wants them to do.

WITNESS

What group or community has God called you to reach out to as a cell? Is it people in a particular village or workplace, people of a particular age group or gender, people with particular needs or interests. (If you are unsure, pray about this)

The following questions are ones which it would be good to work through as a cell. Plan a specific time or times to work through these together. Probably at your next cell meeting before moving on to session 2 after that.

- Each share your personal vision for reaching out to the people you have identified
- What do you think God is doing already in this community?
- Where do you think the needs are and the points of darkness or difficulty?
- What gifts and resources do we bring?
- Who might our partners be? (churches? School? Charities?)
- What will be the cost of doing what you have in mind? (financial/ emotional/time)
- What will make you shout “Hallelujah!” in one year’s time and in 5 years?
- How can we find out more about the community we think we may be called to serve?

Pray for each other and particularly about any issues which have cropped up for you tonight.

NB – These cell notes are based on the Booklet “Listening for Mission” available from www.freshexpressions.org.uk. At £5 for 5 copies. Your group might like a copy each.

Session 2 – Initial Research

WELCOME

Watch the Living Room Clip from the Expressions DVD 1. How did the team listen to the students and build up their own sense of community in the early stages? (There is a copy at the Rectory or you can borrow from the MSM course)

WORD

Read Nehemiah 1–2.

- What steps did Nehemiah take to find out about Jerusalem?
- What was his responses?
- How does Nehemiah “audit” (assess the situation) in Jerusalem once he has arrived?

How does this story speak into your situation as you seek to reach a particular community/engage in a particular project for God?

Pray for each other and about what God is saying to you.

WITNESS

Get a large scale map of the local area. Plot on it your team members and any not–yet–Christians you are in contact with in the local community. Then put on the key meeting places.

OR

If you are seeking to reach out to a network rather than a geographical area – draw a spider diagram of the network on a sheet of paper. Show on it the patterns and places where people meet, the methods and content of communication, people who connect others together and people who influence opinion.

Pray about what you learn from this exercise.

WORSHIP

What do you think God is doing already in the community to which you want to reach out? Spend some time praising God for individual people and good things happening.

Session 3 – In depth listening

WELCOME

By this time, you will have basic information about the community/ kind of people you are seeking to serve – Watch the story of “Somewhere Else” from the Expressions DVD 1 and see how a new community began as one minister walked the streets of Liverpool, watching, praying and listening

WORD

Read Acts 17.16–34 (Paul in Athens)

- What aspects of Athenian culture does Paul find out about?
- How does this shape his approach to sharing the message about Jesus with them?

How does this story speak into your situation as you seek to reach a particular community/engage in a particular project for God? Pray for each other and about what God is saying to you.

WORSHIP

“What you worship as something unknown, is the One I am proclaiming to you” Acts 17.23

“In Him we live and move and have our being.

As some of your poets have said, “We are His children.”” Acts 17.28

Praise God for his presence in all cultures and in particular signs of his presence in the community to which you seek to reach out. Spend some time praising God for individual people and good things happening.

WITNESS

HERE ARE SOME OF THE QUESTIONS YOU WILL PROBABLY NEED TO FIND ANSWERS TO BY EXPLORING THEM WITH THE COMMUNITY WHICH YOU SEEK TO SERVE:

- ARE THERE NEEDS THAT CAN BE MET BY LOVING SERVICE?
- WHAT ARE THE HARDSHIPS AND DIFFICULTIES, JOYS AND PLEASURES IN PEOPLE’S LIVES?
- WHAT DO PEOPLE MOST VALUE? WHAT DO THEY PLACE A LOW VALUE ON?
- HOW DO PEOPLE RELATE TO GOD? DO THEY EVER THINK OF GOING TO CHURCH? DO THEY PRAY?
- HOW DO THEY GET TO KNOW NEW PEOPLE?

Discuss how best you can do some in depth listening to the people you are seeking to serve and plan to do this. Here are some ideas – choose one or two which are most relevant to your situation or invent your own ways:

- Set up one-to-one meetings with representatives of the community and talk in depth with them (You could ask some of the questions above.)
- Stand on the street or at a meeting place with a DVD camera and interview passers by, asking the questions
- Invite one small group or more to a pub meal or other informal meeting in a relaxed setting. Provide something to eat and drink and a warm welcome and ask those who come to tell you about their wider community.
- Offer a meeting place or some practical help or join in an activity in which many from the group you seek to serve participate. As you do things together, you will more naturally be able to get to know the people who you are alongside. Most of us will only share ourselves with those we are coming to know and trust.

Session 4 – More In depth listening

WELCOME

Summarise all that you have learned so far about the community you are seeking to serve. Draw the community – representing them as a person or as a family or as an abstract shape on a large sheet of paper.

WITNESS

If you have not already done some practical things to engage in in-depth listening with the people you seek to serve, continue your conversation from last time. Plan a date or dates for a meal or activity at which you can spend time with the people you wish to serve better.

Remember, these are the sorts of things you need to answer to serve a community well and share Jesus with them in a helpful way:

- ARE THERE NEEDS THAT CAN BE MET BY LOVING SERVICE?
- WHAT ARE THE HARDSHIPS AND DIFFICULTIES, JOYS AND PLEASURES IN PEOPLE'S LIVES?
- WHAT DO PEOPLE MOST VALUE? WHAT DO THEY PLACE A LOW VALUE ON?
- HOW DO PEOPLE RELATE TO GOD? DO THEY EVER THINK OF GOING TO CHURCH? DO THEY PRAY?
- HOW DO THEY GET TO KNOW NEW PEOPLE?

Add any new insights to the map you made in session 2

WORD

Read Numbers 13 & 14.1–9 (Moses and the explorers)

- Whose idea is it to send explorers?
- What were they to do?
- What is the difference between the response of Caleb and the rest of the spies?
- How does this story speak into the mission God has given you? In what ways are you like the explorers and in what ways different?

Pray for each other and about what God is saying to you.

WORSHIP

Joshua and Caleb recognised when things looked difficult that God was their protection and the one who would enable them to carry out what he had sent them to do (verses 6–9). Spend some time praising God for his strength, wisdom and power.

Session 5 – Reflection & Testing God’s Call

WELCOME

Think about what makes good news. Tell the group about an issue you are facing and say what would be good news for you in that situation.

WORSHIP

Praise God that He has good news for our every need. For example

WHEN...	GOD GIVES...
Lonely	Friendship
Empty	Fulfilment
Guilty	Forgiveness
Broken	Wholeness
Ill	Healing
Trapped	Freedom
Rejected	More than Acceptance (He seeks us out)
Feeling Worthless	Reassurance of our infinite value
Aimless	Purpose for Living
Dying	Eternal Life

WORD & WITNESS

Read Acts 13.1–3 (The Church in Antioch)

1. What is the Church in Antioch doing in order to discover God’s call?
2. How does God lead them to take the next steps in mission?
3. Spread out the maps and diagrams you have made. Pray and spend some time thinking about how the gospel is good news for the community you are seeking to reach. From the pictures you are building up, which aspects of the gospel are likely to speak into the needs of the community (The list above may help). This may be your “open door”. How will you as a team communicate and practically demonstrate these aspects of the gospel?
4. The “open door” is just the beginning, spend some time thinking about the ways in which gospel values may be most challenging to people as they grow in discipleship.
5. Plan to invite a respected Christian friend or minister to meet with the group next time to listen to what you think God is saying and your developing plans. Give them permission to ask some hard questions and give you feedback.
6. Spend some time listening to God together. Share anything that you believe God is saying.

EXTRA

The following may be helpful in testing what you believe God is calling you to do:-

Is there a sense of inner peace and gentle encouragement from God?

Has something "come to life" for you in prayer or from the scriptures?

Does the plan make sense to you (in the group) and to others whom you respect and with whom you have consulted?

Will going forward increase faith, hope and love, even if it is tough?

Is the glory for God or for you?

Have you counted the cost of beginning this and seeing it through?