



ENCOUNTERING GOD

Tending Your Heart
and Resources

If you would like a digital copy of this document, please email Rick Bewsher at bewsher@gmail.com and reference Lifegroup Leader Training document.

ENCOUNTERING GOD: TENDING YOUR HEART

- 1) The Nature of God's Voice – The Litmus Test
- 2) Tending Your Heart – Overview
- 3) Tending Your Heart – As a *Proactive* Lifestyle
- 4) Process Diagram
- 5) Listening Journal
- 6) The Essence of Discipleship

1) THE NATURE OF GOD'S VOICE – The Litmus Test

- The nature of God's thoughts will be spontaneous and positive, usually in the first person.
- It will affirm the character of the Holy Spirit - Encourager, Comforter, Teacher, Guide, Healer, Counselor, Revealer of Truth.
- It will reflect the fruit of the Spirit - loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, gentle (Galatians 5).
- His words will not violate scripture but easily align with scripture.

FURTHER INDICATORS:

- When received, His words bring healing, freedom and life-transformation with strength and joy to walk them out.
- God's voice within you will not eradicate your personality or manner of speech (1 Corinthians 6:17). It may sound like you – your flavor.
- His words are light, gentle and easily cut off by any exertion of our own thoughts and will, so we must honor the flow (John 7:38) over and above self-effort.
- His words may address sin or be a gentle rebuke that will produce a longing for restoration.

2) TENDING YOUR HEART - Overview

INTIMACY WITH GOD – OUR ABSOLUTE PRIORITY

- Jesus died so we could enjoy intimacy with Him – dialogue, sharing hearts (Matthew 27:50-51; Exodus 25:22).
- We are to live listening to Him (Deuteronomy 8:3).
- Jesus modeled this for us (John 5:19; 8:26 and 28).
- It is the one thing necessary (Luke 10:39).
- We can all hear Him speak (John 10:27).
- By cultivating a lifestyle of *proactively* listening to and receiving from God, we are able to enjoy increasing intimacy with Him and deny the enemy opportunity to rob us.

THE BATTLE

- The enemy's strategy is to kill our intimacy with the Lord – he speaks lies against the character of God or our value/identity in Christ (Matthew 27:43).
- We believe in our hearts (Romans 10:10) – but are often desensitized to lies.
- God knows our hearts – we can ask the Wonderful Counselor to reveal the lies (Isaiah 9:6).
- Lies are sown in wounds – forgive the offender to break the power of the lie.

OVERCOMING HINDRANCES TO RECEIVE FROM GOD

- Renounce lies about God or ourselves.
- Repent for partnering with the enemy and for giving lies authority.
- Receive from God the truth that will ignite our hearts to replace the lies.
- To receive, we must intentionally make room in our hearts to embrace what God is saying.
- Unpack with Him what He says – declaring and rejoicing in it until your heart is full.
- Then our minds are renewed and our hearts strengthened so we can recognize and resist lies, temptations and hindrances to enjoying intimacy. We are then able to thrive in Him.

3) TENDING YOUR HEART – As a Proactive Lifestyle!

“Watch over your heart with all diligence for from it flow the springs of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

DEVELOPING A PROACTIVE LIFESTYLE

Don't wait until you are triggered. Intentionally invite Jesus into your moments throughout your day. Share your day with Him and open your heart to receive from Him. You may ask:

- Jesus, what are You teaching me right now?
- How do You want me to respond to this?
- Father, what do You want to tell me about Yourself that will help me trust You more?
- Father, how do You want me to see you today?
- What does my heart need to hear from You right now?
- What identity do You want to speak over me today?

RESPOND QUICKLY WHEN TRIGGERED

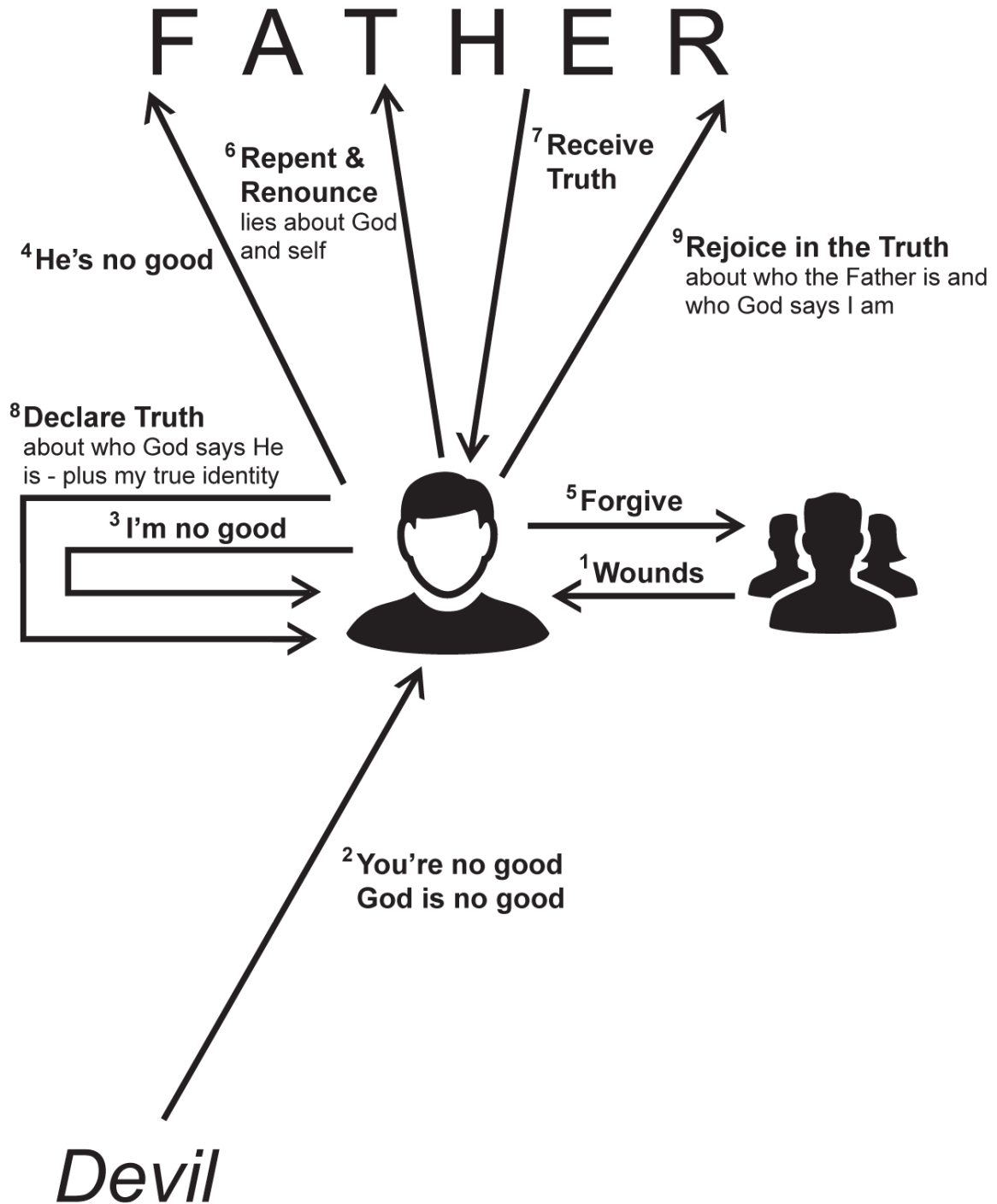
To grow in intimacy with God, be attentive to your heart and take note of anything that moves you away from peace and rest throughout the day (Romans 13:14b; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Mark 4:19). Examples: Disappointment, discouragement, fear, loneliness, worry, anxiety, lust, anger, etc.

1. **CHOOSE TO TURN TO JESUS:** If we do not turn to Jesus and let Him meet our need, we will fill our hearts with something else.
Jesus said, “Do not let your heart be troubled” [‘agitated’] (John 14:1). We can choose! (Psalm 27:3).
2. **ASK:** When moved away from security and rest, turn your mind and heart to God.
Ask aloud if possible:
 - Father, what is this really about? (Psalm 139:23-24)
 - Listen and don't discount what you receive.
 - He may reveal sin you need to repent of, a lie you believe, someone you need to forgive, a spirit you have given access to, etc.*If there is a heavy or persistent burden, pain or grief then see note below ****
3. **RECOGNIZE:** Honestly and humbly admit any lie or action you need to take and follow His lead. Forgive and bless others when necessary.
4. **RENOUNCE:** Break of any partnership with the enemy and renounce any lie (aloud if possible).
5. **REPENT:** Repent for partnering with the enemy and giving the lie authority. Ask for forgiveness for any sin God reveals or any sinful reaction to your wound by self-protection, denial, self-comfort, etc.
6. **RECEIVE AN EXCHANGE!:** “An empty heart invites attack” (Matthew 12:43-45). Fill it with *living* truth (Romans 10:17; John 17:8)! Ask what truths the Father has for your heart in exchange for the lies (Isaiah 61:3, 7a; Proverbs 2:1-10 NASB). If possible, journal them. Let them sink into and fill your heart (Psalm 51:6; 119:11).
7. **REJOICE:** Rejoice in what He has given you in exchange for the lie (aloud if possible)! Declare it over your life! Thank Him and worship! Ask for more! Unpack it with Him!

*** Pour out your heart to Him (Psalm 62:8). Cast your care onto Him (1Peter 5:7). Place it on His body on the Cross (Isaiah 53:4a). Let Him comfort you (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4). Receive His exchange (Isaiah 61:1-3).

4) FREEDOM FROM WOUNDS AND LIES

- Break partnership with lies through forgiveness and renunciation.
- Receive and rejoice in the truth from the Father.



5) LISTENING JOURNAL

You can address the Father, Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Get ready to record first impressions:

- Do I believe that You want to speak to me?
- Why do You want to speak to me?
- What do You want me to believe about hearing You?

If you are having trouble receiving, make these pronouncements in faith:

- In the name of Jesus, I renounce the lie I cannot hear You.
- I renounce the lie that You don't want to speak with me.
- I renounce the lie that You want to speak to others more than me.
- I renounce the lie that it is not safe for me to hear from You.
- I give myself permission to hear from You.
- Father, I give You permission to speak to me now.
- What do You give me in exchange for the lie I cannot hear You?
- *Write it down. Receive it. Rejoice in it.*

Go to the next step:

- Ask the Father: What kind of relationship do I want to have with You?

Write down what comes, recording the spontaneous flow of your thoughts. Don't think about it at this point - just write what comes.

- Ask Him: What kind of relationship do You want to have with me?

Receive anything that is encouraging and life-giving by thanking Him and rejoicing in the truth. Worship.

6) THE ESSENCE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is making disciples of Jesus. Okay, that's obvious when we think about it, but helping people really connect with Jesus tends to be overshadowed by a list of tasks to be fulfilled - reading scripture, praying to Jesus, pursuing fellowship and accountability, sharing our faith and so on.

Jesus Himself modeled discipleship for us. He was discipled by His Father.

- “He awakens Me morning by morning. He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple” (Isaiah 50:4, 5).
- “I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me” (John 14:28).

If we are to be discipled by Jesus, then our primary goal is to learn how to hear and respond to Him. Whether we are reading Scripture, walking with other believers or sharing our faith, we need to be open to the instruction of the Holy Spirit who has been given as our Helper to lead us into all truth. Dependence on Him is necessary if we are to even pray effectively (Romans 8:26). And, of course, praying itself is severely limited and soon becomes robbed of enjoyment if we are not listening to Him and entering into dialogue with Him so He can guide and encourage us.

Disciplers often find they are weighed down and drained by trying to give the disciples the answers and help they need. Now of course, patience and endurance are often required in coming alongside someone and helping them grow in Christ. The problem is that disciplers often cultivate, maybe unwittingly, a dependence on themselves as source – instead of dependence on Jesus. What a relief it is for disciplers to recognize the radical difference!

From the outset, a disciple should learn they can turn to Jesus, ask Him about anything and receive what He has for them. They should know they can bring Him any burden, difficulty, problem or pain, and get help and encouragement directly from the One who knows and understands them like no other.

Disciplers are only effective to the degree that they point others to Jesus and help them engage with Him!

Sadly, it is very common for disciples to become so dependent on the discipler, mentor, elder, pastor or close friend that they are at a loss when they find themselves in a situation where they no longer have access to their help and encouragement. They have not experienced the reality of deep friendship with Jesus. They have not cultivated a lifestyle of enjoyable intimacy with Him that meets the deepest needs of their hearts.

Modeling and leading disciples to enter into a simple two-way conversation with God builds confidence in turning to Him as their Father, Comforter, Shepherd, Teacher, Guide, Healer, Deliverer and closest Friend. Impediments to our growth in Christ will be revealed and overcome as we come to the “Wonderful Counselor.”

The disciple is not limited to the strengths or weaknesses of the disciple, but is able to access the unlimited counsel of God!

Every discipler should learn how to facilitate the disciple’s connection with the Father.

Cultivating a lifestyle of “tending your heart” is a simple and very effective way to facilitate dialogue with Jesus - enjoying His companionship, processing heart issues with Him and learning from Him.

Confidence in coming to the Father and immediately receiving from Him what our hearts need is the gift offered to every believer.

ENCOUNTERING GOD: RESOURCES

- 1) Hearing God and Expectancy
- 2) Suggested Questions for Lifegroups
- 3) Journal Tending Your Heart
- 4) Journaling Steps to Forgiveness
- 5) Guidelines and Pitfalls in Journaling

1) HEARING GOD AND EXPECTANCY

- Matthew 27:51 - Access to Holy of Holies.
Exodus 25:21 - 22 - I will meet with you...speak to you.
- Deuteronomy 8:3 - Continuously speaking. We truly live by what He speaks.
Romans 1:17; 10:17 – We live by hearing.
- Isaiah 55:3 - Listen that you may live.
- John 8:26, 28 - Jesus is our role model.
- Luke 10:39, 42 - The one thing necessary.
- Psalm 27:4 - One thing I do...behold...and enquire.
- Matthew 13:14-15 - Hearing, seeing but heart has become dull.
- Proverbs 4:23 - Tend/guard your heart.
- Psalm 95:7 - 8 - Today if you want to hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.
- Hebrews 3:7 - 8 - Do not discount His voice.
- Hebrews 4:2 – Believe His heart as we listen.
- Galatians 3:2 - Hearing with faith.
- Ecclesiastes 5:1 - 2 - Draw near to listen....do not be hasty in word or hurry your heart.
- Isaiah 30:19 – He hears your cry and He will answer you.
- Jeremiah 33:3 - Call to Me and I will answer you and I will tell you great...things which you do not know.
- Isaiah 58:9, 11 - You will cry and He will say, “Here I am.” The Lord will guide you continually.
- Isaiah 30:21 - You will hear a word from your Teacher ...whenever you turn.
- Proverbs 1:33 - Live secure.
- Isaiah 1:18 - Come now, and let us reason together.

- John 10:27 - My sheep hear Me.
- John 10:3 - He calls His own sheep by name.
- Isaiah 9:6 - Counselor. John 20:1 - Father. John 15:14 – Friend. Requires a two-way conversation.
- Isaiah 50:4-5 - He awakens my ear to listen.
- Psalm 143:8 - Let me hear Your loving-kindness.
- Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29 and 3:6, 13, 22 - Let him hear what the Spirit says.
- Revelation 3:20 - If anyone hears My voice...opens the door I will come in... dine with him and he with Me.
- Luke 8:15 - Treasure what you hear.
- Job 23:12 – Treasure His commands.
- Psalm 119:11 – Hide His words in your heart that you may not sin.
- Proverbs 8:32 - Happy are those who listen and respond.
- Psalm 1:13 - The enemy is quickly subdued.
- 1 John 5:14 - 15 - Immediate expectancy.

2) SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR LIFEGROUP

To cultivate dialogue with God:

- 1) Father, what kind of relationship do I want to have with You? (Let *Him* tell you.)
Father, what kind of relationship do You want to have with me?
 - Receive it by declaring and rejoicing in it.
 - Then share and pray for each other.

- 2) Father, in what areas do I find it hard to trust You?
What do You want to tell me about Yourself that will help me trust You more?
 - Receive it by declaring and rejoicing in it.
 - Then share and pray for each other.

- 3) Father, how do You want to encourage me right now?
What do I need to know about who I am to You?
What do You want to tell me about myself that I need to know right now?
 - Receive it by declaring and rejoicing in it.
 - Then share and pray for each other.

- 4) Father, what are You teaching me in these circumstances?
How do You want me to respond in a way that will bring You glory?
 - Then share and pray for each other

- 5) Holy Spirit, in what area do You want me to be more fully released in my life?
How do You want me to cooperate with You there?
Jesus, is there anything You want to tell me about Yourself?
 - Receive it by declaring and rejoicing in it.
 - Then share and pray for each other.

- 6) Burdens to yield:
 - Father, what burden do You want me to yield to You?
 - How can I yield my burden to You?
 - Is there anything keeping me from releasing it to You?
 - How do You want to help me here? How can I cooperate with You?
 - Then share and pray for each other.

- 7) If someone shares a burden or problem:
 - Each person listens and journals
 - If encouraging, uplifting, comforting then share with that person and pray it over them.
 - Remember to always submit any 'words' and not impose.
 - Example: "This is the impression I received," or "This is what I feel God is saying."
 - Verses: "God is telling you this!"

3) JOURNAL – TENDING YOUR HEART

“We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS:

Father, what area in my life right now do I need to ask You about?

- Reaction to circumstances, family pressures, etc. – “Do not let your heart be troubled” (John 14:1 and 27). Relationship with God, others?
- What keeps me from listening to You about this?
- How do You want me to cooperate with You in this?

Father, in what area of my life am I most prone to think negatively or be discouraged?

- What lie do I believe that causes this?
- What do You have to say about that?
- How do You want me to tend my heart more effectively in this area?

Father, what does my heart need to hear from You right now?

Father, how do You want to encourage me today?

CHALLENGE! Cultivating ‘Tending Your Heart’ as a lifestyle

Take one day this week:

- Set your alarm on your phone for every two hours over a 12- hour period.
What are you thinking about?
- If it’s negative, ask Him: Father, what do You have to say to help me move over in my heart here?
- If it is positive, thank Him and rejoice!
- **Unpack** it with Him until your heart is met!

4) JOURNALING STEPS TO FORGIVENESS AND HEALING

He knows you better than you know yourself – don't decide or try to figure it out – ask Him and He will tell you.

Father, what are the lies I have believed about You? *List them.*

Father, what are the lies I have believed about myself? *List them.*

FORGIVE, RELEASE AND BLESS

- Father, who do I need to forgive that caused me to believe this lie?
- Am I willing to forgive _____?
IF NOT: If I don't forgive ____ what will my life be like?
If I do forgive ____ what will my life be like?
- What do I need to them forgive _____ for? [We need to forgive for more than the act, but what it did in our heart.]
Father, I forgive _____ for _____. [Speak out all we need to forgive for as many times as needed.]
Father, is there anything else I need to forgive _____ for in this area?
- Father I take their sins against me and the wounds I received and lay them upon the body of Jesus on the cross. I thank You that You bore all my pains and sorrows (Isaiah 53:4-5) so I don't need to carry them any more.
- I repent for my sinful reactions, any bitterness, resentment or anger I have had toward my offender. Father, do You forgive me? (Yes.) Then I forgive myself.
- Father, I release _____ from all their offenses & wounds against me. I bless them in Jesus' name.

RENOUCE (*The lies He revealed to you at the beginning.*)

- Father, I renounce the lie that You _____ [corresponding lies about God].
- Father, I renounce the lie that I am _____ [negative identity, or lies about my value to God].

REPENT

- Father, forgive me for partnering with the enemy and believing these lies (be explicit) about You (Or about myself).
- Father, do you forgive me? (Yes) Then I forgive myself.

RECEIVE!! (ESSENTIAL - SPEND TIME HERE)

- Father, what do you have for my heart in exchange for these lies?
- Unpack what He says!

REJOICE!! (ESSENTIAL)

- Thank Him for what He has given, declaring and receiving His truth in your heart.

5) GUIDELINES AND PITFALLS IN JOURNALING

In the early stages of learning to listen to God you should bring your journaling to a mentor whenever there is any question about the content being scriptural or being in line with God's character.

Avoid predictive journaling! In asking the deeper questions we can make the mistake of moving to predictive questions about the future. Moving from, "Should I ask this person to marry me?" to, "Will I marry this person?" He may say, "Yes, go ahead and ask," but the person has free will and can refuse. Or the big one, "Will this person be healed?" We cannot try and use God like a fortune teller. Witchcraft seeks knowledge of the future for our own personal ends and benefit.

God may at times choose to tell us something of our future regarding His promises to us or His plans for us. But when we press for more detail we will often get, "Trust Me." **If we keep pressing Him** we can open the door to the enemy and become deceived by a lying spirit or invent an answer according to our own fleshly desires. We must release our preferences to His care and let Him give them back to us if He chooses.

In this life we are always in process as God seeks to shape us into the image of Christ. To journal about what He wants to do in our hearts **in the midst of struggles and challenges can be some of the deepest places of meeting God!** With God, what He gains in us in the process is often the goal. We grow in intimacy with Him by coming back again and again to receive from Him what He desires to give to our hearts as the process unfolds - reassurance, direction, comfort, pure motives and confidence in His character.