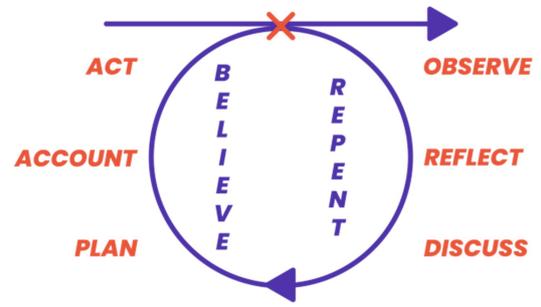


# Hearing God

## (Learning Circle)



What did Jesus teach us about listening to him and putting what he says into practice?

### Scripture

Read these sections of Jesus' teaching and summarise them in your own words.

John 10:1-5 (Jesus the Good Shepherd)

John 10:27-30 (Jesus talks about his flock)

Luke 6:46-49 (Jesus talks about wise and foolish builders)

What does Jesus say about hearing God's voice?

In the parable, what was similar about the wise and foolish builders, and what was different?

### Story

Charles Swindoll shared this example in his book, *Living Above the Level of Mediocrity*:

'Imagine that you work for a company whose president needed to travel out of the country and spend an extended time abroad. So he says to you and the other employees, "While I'm gone, I want you to pay close attention to the business. You manage things while I'm away. I will write you regularly. When I do, I will instruct you in what you should do from now until I return from this trip."

He leaves and stays away for a couple of years. During that time he writes often, communicating his desires and concerns. Finally he returns. As he walks up to the front door of the company he immediately discovers everything is in a mess--weeds flourishing in the flower beds, windows broken across the front of the building, the receptionist is dozing, loud music roaring from several offices, etc. Instead of making a profit, the business has suffered a great loss. Without hesitation he calls everyone together and asks, "What happened? Didn't you get my letters?"

You say, "Oh, yeah, sure. We got all your letters. We've even bound them in a book. And some of us have memorized them. In fact, we have 'letter study' every Sunday. You know, those were really great letters." I think the president would then ask, "But what did you do about my instructions?" And, no doubt the employees would respond, "Do? Well, nothing. But we read every one!"

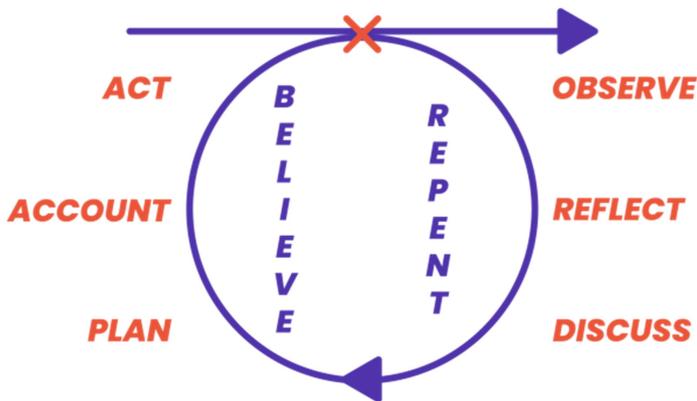
Adapted from Charles Swindoll, *Living Above the Level of Mediocrity: A Commitment to Excellence* (Thomas Nelson, 1989), p. 242.

What does this story illustrate about the importance of listening to God?

Is there anything you like or dislike about how God is portrayed through this story?

## Shape

**The Circle** is a diagram that helps us to remember to be attentive to what Jesus is saying and be diligent in putting it into practice. It uses the words from Mark 1:15.



It starts with something called a **Kairos**. 'Kairos' is a Greek word used in the New Testament to describe a notable moment in time; sometimes when an external event stands out to us, sometimes when we sense God's invitation, or his Spirit's conviction. God is often speaking to us in and through these moments, seeking to bring about transformation in us. So the first thing we need to do is **Observe** that such a moment is occurring.

From observing that a Kairos moment has occurred, we continue round the circle to **Reflect**. This is where we begin to ask questions to try and get to the heart and details of what Jesus is saying to us. It means asking questions like: 'Why was that moment significant for me?', 'Why did it stand out?', 'What might God be trying to say to me through this?'

After Reflect, we move to **Discuss** as we involve others in the process and ask for their reflections and insights and invite them to ask us questions. This transparent discussion not only helps us get clarity on what God is saying to us but it also builds friendship and community with others.

By now we are likely to have arrived at a clear sense of what God is saying to us, which will have caused us to think differently – in the Bible the word used is '**Repent**'. We begin to see things from God's perspective and can start to consider how God wants us to live differently as a result; which is always about actively trusting in God in our lives – the Bible calls this '**Belief**'.

We start this process to 'Believe' by making a **Plan** based on what we think God wants us to do about what he has said.

Once a plan has formed, we can ask people to hold us to **Account** for that plan, i.e. asking someone to check in with us in a week or so to see how we are getting on with living differently.

The final step is then to **Act** – to go and do what you believe God is asking of you.

## So What?

In groups of around 4-6 people, go around the Learning Circle together:

Take some time in silence to consider the last week or two, and to each **Observe** a **Kairos** moment that has occurred. It may have been when something stood out from the Bible, or a situation that was over-reacted to, etc.

Have everyone share their **Kairos** briefly.

Focussing on one person in the group, ask them to **Reflect** on this moment and share more about what they think God might be saying to them through it.

Invite others in the group to share any questions, insights or reflections they have on what they think God might be saying to this person and **Discuss** this together. (Try to avoid anyone telling them what to do – we want everyone to hear God for themselves.)

As they get clarity on what God is saying to them, and what he wants them to do about it, encourage them to make a **Plan** and to ask someone to hold them to **Account**.

Encourage them to **Act** on this plan over the coming week.

## Grow Further

### Memory verse:

John 10:27 (NIVUK)

'My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.'

### Other Bible passages:

- James 1:22-25
- Romans 12:2
- Romans 10:17
- John 8:47
- Jeremiah 33:3
- Mark 4:24
- John 16:12-15

### Other resources:

Study 6, 'Continuous Breakthrough' in *Building a Discipling Culture* by Mike Breen (3dm, 2011).