

## Leader's Guide

# Session 1: The Power of a Whisper

### OPEN

**Leader:** *Open the session with prayer. Pass out the Participants' Handout to everyone in the group. If your group is brand new or if everyone doesn't know each other well, spend time getting to know each other before asking the opening question.*

**Describe a time when you had trouble hearing someone (poor sound quality at an event, loud conversation over lunch, soft spoken coworker in a meeting, etc.). How do you feel when you can't hear someone well?**

**Leader:** *If you have someone in your group who's hard of hearing or deaf, this could be a good opportunity to ask them about their experience. How do they feel about being deaf or hard of hearing? What's challenging? What benefits have they realized?*

**How well would you say you hear the voice of God? Why do you think that is?**

In this series, Mark Batterson will teach how to discern God's voice in our lives. Based on his book *Whisper*, we'll learn the things that deafen us to God's voice, the languages of God, and what it means to listen to God.

### VIEW

**Show Session 1:** *The Power of a Whisper* (12 minutes)

## REVIEW

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Mark talked about how Samuel did not yet know the Lord, which is why he mistook God's voice for Eli's. **How are knowing God and hearing His voice related? In your experience, how has being close to God helped you hear from Him?**

Read 1 Kings 19:11–12. **Why did God reveal Himself through a gentle whisper?**

**Leader:** *To answer this question, retell the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:16–46), which happened right before this passage. God performed a miracle and the prophets of Baal were put to shame and then killed. At the beginning of 1 Kings 19, queen Jezebel threatened Elijah's life, so he fled. God came to him on the mountain in a gentle way to show that He is both the God of mighty miracles and the God who cares for His people.*

**Why does God sometimes speak in a whisper? How did Mark answer that question?** (He said that you have to get close to someone to hear them whisper. More than hearing God, the goal is intimacy with Him.)

God loves us and desires a relationship with us. That's why He speaks to us. We're going to explore how He speaks in this series. Before we dive deeper, we're going to investigate why we should listen and what prevents us from listening to Him.

## **BIBLE EXPLORATION**

While Jesus was on earth, He often spoke against the Pharisees and teachers of the law. He rebuked these religious leaders and their attitude toward people, the law, and God. In the passage we're about to read, Jesus begins speaking to a group of Pharisees after they questioned His healing of a man on the Sabbath. We pick up after that story in John 10.

Read John 10:1–10.

**What is the relationship between the sheep and the shepherd? Why do the sheep follow the shepherd's voice?**

The sheep follow the shepherd because they know his voice. They are familiar with him and recognize when he speaks.

**Why are we able to hear God in the first place? How did Jesus make a way for us to be in relationship with God?**

Hearing God's voice begins with choosing to be in relationship with Him. Jesus made that possible through His death and resurrection. **After we follow Jesus, how can we get to know God?** (We can get to know Him by reading His Word, praying, living in community, etc.)

Jesus talks about the sheep that only follow the shepherd's voice. **Why won't the sheep follow someone else's voice?**

It seems in these verses that the sheep clearly know what is and isn't the shepherd's voice. If we apply this illustration to our lives, it doesn't always seem easy to know the voice of God. **Would you say it's easy or difficult to know when something is from God or not? Why do you think that is?**

**Who is the thief Jesus alludes to in verse 10?** (The enemy, Satan.) **What does he do?** (Steals, kills, and destroys.)

**How does Jesus describe those who try to deceive the sheep?** (He calls them thieves and robbers.) **How might**

**the deceivers relate to the thief in verse 10?** (They operate with the same motive: to steal, kill, and destroy.)

If we go back to the Pharisees mentioned in verse one, Jesus spoke against them. They issued so many additional laws that the people felt burdened. The Pharisees, who were supposed to lead them towards God, ended up leading people astray. **How are the voices in your life—other than God’s—trying to steal, kill, or destroy you? What do they deprive you of?**

**When have you thought you heard something from God, but it turned out to not be the case? How did you react? What did you learn in the process?**

**Why do you think we listen to the noises that promise destruction more than the voice of God? What’s appealing about those other voices?**

We have many voices crowding our minds and hearts. We get used to hearing every voice besides the voice of God. But, God hasn’t left us unequipped—He teaches us how to be discerning of the voices we hear. Read 1 John 4:1–2. **How should we exercise discernment with the voices we hear?**

**What are some ways you discern whether or not something is from God?** (Answer include: reading Scripture, seeking wise counsel from trusted Christians, prayer, etc.)

**How does Scripture play a role in knowing what God has to say?**

We can know God by reading His Word. The Bible is God’s gift to us—His very words written for His people. We’ll talk more about Scripture in the third session, but it’s important to know that we can know God by reading His Word.

When we read the Bible, we see the true nature of God. Even this passage teaches us about God’s character. **If we look back to John 10:10, what does Jesus offer in contrast to the destruction of the thief ?** (Jesus offers life to the full.)

Jesus offers us life to the full when we choose to follow Him. What He gives us doesn’t lack anything, yet

sometimes other ways seem more appealing. **Looking back on the passage, what does “life to the full” mean?** (It means protection, guidance, being known, salvation, provision, etc.)

**What appeals to you about the full life Jesus has to offer? Why?**

**As you’ve followed Jesus, how has His voice proven to be trustworthy? How has following His lead been better than going your own way?**

**What could it look like for you to wholeheartedly listen to Christ this week? What voices would you have to mute? What practices could you put in place to hear Him better?**

**As you focus on Christ, how could you exercise discernment when listening to Him and the other voices in your life?**

### **LAST WORD**

Jesus sums up the John 10 passage later on in the chapter. Read John 10:27–30. **How do these verses reassure you of God’s power? What does God’s power mean for your life, according to these verses?**

Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice so we could be united with God for eternity. He laid down His life so we could live. Because of God’s great love for us, we have the privilege of speaking and listening to Him.

We’ve briefly reflected on the gospel in this session. **What has stood out to you about Jesus’s sacrifice and resurrection through our discussion? How have you been encouraged through this session?**

As we go into this week, let’s pray that God would refresh the gospel in our hearts to create a desire to listen to Him. Let’s close in prayer.

**Leader:** *Encourage your group to pick at least one of the following suggested applications to put into practice this week. You may even invite them to circle the one they choose. Follow up at the beginning of the next session to see how it went.*

**Fight:** Choose to fight against the lies that could be deafening you to God's voice. Write down the lies you believe on 3x5 cards and write the truth of Scripture on the other side. Whenever you're tempted to believe the lie, read the verse and pray for God's truth to work in your heart.

**Create:** Create something that reminds you of God's voice. Write a poem about God speaking to you, draw what it feels like to be close to God, or use calligraphy to write out one of the verses from this session. Use what you create to remind you that God speaks to you.

**Pray:** Pray God would use this series to speak to you. Ask Him for an open heart for whatever He wants to say. Pray the same for those who are doing this study with you.

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