



ENTER God's presence

Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

– Deuteronomy 11:18-19

Lord God, as we gather again today to hear your word and to be renewed by the hope that comes from faith in you, we ask that the Holy Spirit would fix your words in our hearts and give us the courage to speak your word boldly to others. Amen.



SHARE life together

1. **Where have you seen God's power at work in your life this last week?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **What is your favourite passage of Scripture? Why?**
4. **Have you ever made a choice you have come to regret? What was it? What happened?**

35,000 – that's a big number!

No it's not the number of new COVID cases in Victoria this week, or the businesses that closed in NSW over the last 4 months. It's not even the number of people allowed to go to an NRL match this past weekend. It's the number of choices scientists say the average adult makes in a day: 35,000. From the mundane – what to wear or have for breakfast - to the infinitely more complex and life-altering – when to merge into busy traffic, treatment or care options, vocation, spouse, parenting, home-buying. Every choice shapes or forms our life either leading to peace and contentment or second guessing and regret. Who or what are you listening to in the choices you make and how is that affecting your life, your relationships, your emotions and your future? Today we explore faith-formed listening - a posture that leads to life in its fullest and joy that never ends.

Week beginning:
Sunday 19th July 2020

Worship series:

Faith Formed



VERSE for the week

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 16:11



REMEMBER this week

Only one thing is needed in life - a relationship with Jesus. Time in his presence and listening to his Word will direct your life, shape your mind, form your attitudes, fuel your emotions and inspire contentment and joy in every choice.



LISTEN attentively

Read Luke 10:38-32

- 5. What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?**
- 6. What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?**
- 7. Which of the characters, Mary or Martha, do you most identify with? Why?**

It is common when discussing this text in Bible studies or sermons, to look at the choices that Mary and Martha make and play one of against the other. Mary made the right choice and Martha made the wrong one. After all, Jesus himself says “Mary chose the better part.” Another approach is to encourage a balance, finding a middle road; after all, sometimes there are just things that need to be done. This is one of the big criticism of early monastic orders, while they did a great job of sitting at Jesus feet studying scripture and praying, they removed themselves from participating in the rest of the world and as Christians we are called to do both. But perhaps we miss another important message when we only view things in this way. Did you notice that no one actually criticises Martha’s choice? Martha is not told she made the wrong choice or a bad choice, only that Mary’s choice was better. What if we are to hear a message that Jesus offers us something better than we realise?



GROW deeper

Hospitality in many ancient Eastern cultures was quite a complex and involved process, this was certainly true in Jewish culture in which providing opportunities for ritual cleansing and washing were also a part of the process in most cases. Martha’s choice to offer hospitality to Jesus is not a bad choice. It is most likely that her decision to invite Jesus into her home was influenced by listening to the culture around her and the regulations and expectations that culture demanded around hospitality. Clearly she ends up feeling put out by being left to tend to these obligations on her own.

- 8. Have you ever experienced a time when inviting Jesus into your life seemed more like an inconvenience than a joy? How or why do you think that happened?**
- 9. How does Jesus respond to Martha’s complaint? Have you ever complained to God about an ‘unfair’ situation? How did he respond to you?**

Creating a welcoming and hospitable environment for people is an important job. It can often be thankless and come to feel like a burden. This seems to be what happened to Martha. She began with good intentions and the burden of the tasks she had taken on distracted her from the opportunity she had to be with Jesus. Our churches can be like this sometimes too. In our attempts to be welcoming, we can be distracted by ‘doing’. I wonder how many of us have experienced the joy that is trying to find a new church. Unfortunately, in my experience, most churches do a great job of welcoming people on their first visit, but when guests arrive a second time they are often greeted by people who are too busy catching up with regulars trying to organise a roster swap, or quickly have a chat about some other area of church life that needs attention or discussion. We get distracted and listen to what the world, or the wider church community, or our own history and traditions tell us we need to do. However, if we listened to Jesus in those situations we might find he is calling us out of those choices and into something new.

- 10. How do you determine the tasks that you ‘need’ to do during a day, week, or month?**

We often do a better job of listening to God and asking him for direction when we are trying to make a big decision or if we are about to set out on a new venture. We often struggle much more to keep checking in with him along the way once we have set things in motion. At these points, like Martha, we often revert to asking God to bless our efforts and plans rather than listening to what he might be calling us to do.



LIVE purposefully

The amazing thing about Jesus in this story, is that he doesn't tell Martha off for her decision, he invites her to join him and gives her the opportunity to change her mind. To come and listen like everyone else is and to receive the 'better part' which those have been listening to Jesus are receiving. We like to think that we have autonomy when it comes to making our choices or decisions, but the reality is that there are thousands of voices vying for our attention, seeking to influence us in one way or another. Advertisers have become very good at it, Social media influencers are learning new ways to do it, political parties and media outlets also rely on us hearing their voice over and above the others and yet all of these voices serve their own interest above your best interests. Only the voice of Jesus, the Word made Flesh, calls us out of where we are to something better. Only the voice of the Good Shepherd has the best interest of the sheep at heart. Spending time learning to hear and listen to the voice of God, revealed in scripture is what will allow us to hear him calling us out of our frustrated and burdened life of sin and guilt into a life of freedom and forgiveness. It will make it easier to hear his voice over and above the other distracting voices that burden us with things we 'need' to do. Only one thing is needed, Mary knew what it was and she chose it, Jesus invites us to choose it too.

- 11. What is the first voice you hear each day? What might change if you gave God the first words of your day?**
- 12. These days most of us have access to scripture on our phones with search functions that allow us to locate particular passages easily. But the process of memorising scripture is still helpful, it helps us to internalise God's word in a way that influences and changes us. Try picking a couple of verses to learn from memory before your next LifeGroup.**
- 13. One of the core values we have at LifeWay is reading God's word daily. Sometimes developing a new daily habit can be easier if we incorporate it into something we already do each day. What is something you do every day, like making a coffee, driving to work, checking your email or social media, which you could use to prompt you to read your Bible?**



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for revealing himself to us through the written word of Scripture and the Word Made Flesh, Jesus Christ
- Ask the Holy Spirit to continually call you back to reading God's Word daily and to grow in you a hunger for His Word.
- Pray that God would help you know and understand more of his word, that it would take root in your heart and transform your life.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], may God's word be in your heart and on your lips. Amen