



**Community**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
*of Clarendon Hills*

**Group Devotion  
February 2020  
Theme: Ask and Listen**

***Note to Devotion Leader: You'll want to bring copies of this month's devotion so people can follow along more easily.***

**Opening Prayer** (in unison)

**Gracious God, open our hearts, and minds to hear what you are teaching us today. By the power of your Holy Spirit give us willingness and courage to faithfully follow you. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.**

**Scripture Acts 2:32-39** (Volunteer reader, 2 min)

In this passage of Acts, Peter is addressing a crowd, explaining the resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost, and what it will mean to follow Christ.

<sup>32</sup> This Jesus God raised up. We are all witnesses to that fact. <sup>33</sup> He was exalted to God's right side and received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit. He poured out this Spirit, and you are seeing and hearing the results of his having done so. <sup>34</sup> David didn't ascend into heaven. Yet he says,

*The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right side,*

<sup>35</sup> *until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'*

<sup>36</sup> "Therefore, let all Israel know beyond question that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

<sup>37</sup> When the crowd heard this, they were deeply troubled. They said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

<sup>38</sup> Peter replied, "Change your hearts and lives. Each of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> This promise is for you, your children, and for all who are far away—as many as the Lord our God invites."

**Introduction to Reflection** (Leader reads, 3-4min)

In the pre-meeting devotion, we considered the role asking questions, and really listening, might have in our faith life. As in the passage from Acts above, often in Scripture the followers ask, "What should we *do*?" as they tried to figure out what following Jesus meant. We continue to wonder the same today, particularly in light of the monumental societal changes that are affecting the church. *God, what should we do?*

Our challenge as followers in this regard is twofold. For starters, are we asking the question, or are we assuming we know the answer? Then, are we listening for God's response, or are we trying to do things as we've always done them, or how we want them done for our own benefit? Listening may be the hardest part, because we are so human! Our agendas, desires, and fears too often affect our ability to hear. In Presbyterian tradition, we try to avoid those challenges in part by listening within community, and holding each other accountable. But, it's still so often difficult to listen with complete openness to what God might be telling us.

In Dorothy C. Bass's foundational book on spiritual practice, *Practicing our Faith* (p.108), she provides St. Ignatius of Loyola's<sup>1</sup> helpful list of "predispositions" for discernment that might help us listen for God's answers to our questions:

- ***A passionate commitment to follow God***  
If we are listening with this posture, we listen for answers that will bring us into the fullest participation in God's work in the world.
- ***An attitude of indifference toward all other drives and desires***  
To best hear God's response and guidance, we must first detach ourselves from our own agenda and desires.
- ***A deep sensitivity to the ways and being of God***  
This deep sensitivity - developed through prayer, study of Scripture, worship, and service - enables us to recognize God's voice and movement.

**Group Reflection** (Leader facilitates discussion following the reading, 10 min)

1. Of the three predispositions listed above, which do you think best reflects your posture as leaders of the church when you're trying to hear God?
2. Which do you think is the most challenging for you?
3. Is there one in particular you'd like to work on as a committee/board? How might you do that? How could you hold one another accountable?

**Build a Closing Prayer** (2-3 minutes)

*To the Leader: This month we'll build the closing prayer in a slightly different way, expanding on this month's pre-meeting and group devotions by asking questions as prayer. Here's a guide, but feel free to be creative!*

---

<sup>1</sup> St. Ignatius of Loyola, a 16<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholic saint, was founder of the Jesuits. He's a rather "non-traditional" saint with a very interesting background! If you'd like to learn more about St. Ignatius: <https://jesuits.org/spirituality?PAGE=DTN-20130520125033>

1. Together:

- a. Based on your answers to Reflection Questions 2 and 3 above, what questions about your role as CPC leaders do you want to ask God? For example, if in question 2 you determined that setting aside “all other drives and desires” is a challenge in listening for God, you might ask in your prayer, “God, how would you have us set aside our desires to be completely open to you?”
- b. What do you want to thank God for in the life of CPC?

2. The devotion leader then begins the prayer, filling in the blanks with the list above:

*Gracious and loving God (or other naming of God),*

*we thank you for* (list from 1b above).

*With grateful hearts, we want to serve you faithfully and grow in your likeness.*

*By your grace, we ask these things* (list from 1a above, in the form of questions).

**ALL: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.**

Reminder: Please include a summary of your group’s discussion, including your prayer list, in your meeting minutes.