

## Finding Renewal in the Love of God

### Unit 3: Discovering Renewal in the Presence of the Spirit

#### Prayer Prompts, Week 1

*It's been over 20 years ago now that my good friend Jeanene Reese called me on the phone. Even then we served in ministry together and even then the Lord would use one or the other of us to speak a message of hope or instruction or assurance to the other. The day I remember she had called related to some ministry—I don't even recall which one or what was at issue--unimportant. What I remember is that somewhere toward the end of our call, she asked, "So, how are **you** doing?" The fact was that I was a little flat, and I told her so.*

*In typical Jeanene fashion, she didn't miss a beat. "How's your quiet time before the Lord?" she asked.*

*"Good," I replied. "My study and prayer time are going quite well."*

*"But how is your **quiet** time before the Lord? Study and prayer are **active** moments before the Lord," she continued. "Are you spending time **listening**?"*

*A bit of silence developed as I considered her question. "Well," she finished, "I just know that when I feel like that, I usually haven't spent much time before him listening." Then she closed the conversation, and I sat and pondered her thought: "Listening...to the Lord."*

How do you practice **listening** to the Lord? Even today, 20 years later, I still have much to learn on the subject. But I have learned one thing: in order to listen, one has to remain quiet and still.

Take a moment to consider this idea of "listening" to the Lord. Consider the following questions in a group discussion: Who practices this Christian discipline? How do you practice it? What experiences might you share? If you have never considered this possibility, ponder the idea a while. How does the idea of "listening" to God fit the idea that the Holy Spirit who indwells us is our teacher—we need no one to teach us because the Spirit will guide us in all things? Even if you never "worked on" this virtue, do you think the Lord has ever spoken to you in a quiet moment? Share about that, if you will.

Open today's prayer with a time of praise.

**Prayer leader:** Lord, you *are* an awesome and mighty God. Your ways are not our ways and your thoughts are not our thoughts. Lord, your ways are as far above us as the heavens are the earth. In your wisdom you sent Jesus to walk among us—not as a king, but as a little child and a friend.

**Others:** You walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the evening; *or* you were not in the mighty wind or in the earthquake when Elijah was in the cave; you were present in the small, **quiet** voice; *or* some other way that God has “spoken” to man *or to me*.

Remember to allow for silence—that is one of the points of this exercise. Don't jump out to fill that silence, but obey its instruction and listen: consider God's awesome and faithful nature. You need not pray in turn—in fact, it may be best *not* to pray in turn to allow for more spontaneity. You may pray more than once or not pray aloud at all. The point is to **consider** the Lord and His amazing desire to communicate with us and then to listen for His voice.

When the praise has ended, the prayer leader will direct you into the next phase of the prayer: confession. Following her prompt, there will be three to five minutes of silence (it will seem a long time) as we confess to Him the many ways we have failed to listen to His voice, the difficulty we have in recognizing His voice, and how very badly we would like to hear Him.

**Prayer leader:** (Something on the order of this: Lord, though you have never stopped attempting to communicate yourself to us, we confess that we have not heard.)

After three to five minutes, close the prayer, asking the Father to teach us to listen

**Prayer leader:** Father, we ask that you in your enduring faithfulness not forsake us, but continue to walk with us and speak with us; remind us to listen and give us ears to hear you. Teach us to recognize your voice as easily as we know the voices of those we love most here on earth.

Leave a few moments for others to pray here if they would like, then close the prayer.

When the prayer has ended, don't rush to move or speak. Allow the experience to settle over you. What was your experience with the silence? How did it feel? What did you learn?