



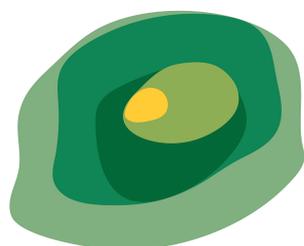
JUST LISTEN!

CHRISTIAN LISTENER TRAINING

PRESENTED BY MAL POPE

*God's challenge to
listen in a noisy world*

COURSE BOOK



acorn
wholeness for all

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INTRODUCTION

God's challenge to listen in a noisy world

Many of us today have discovered the difference it makes when someone really listens to us. Being well listened to can be a life-changing experience, and yet sadly also one which is comparatively rare in our busy world.

How can we respond to this challenge?

JUST LISTEN! is a lively and practical way of beginning to develop the listening attitudes and skills that we need. Produced by Acorn Christian Healing Foundation, the course offers foundational teaching on the value of listening to others, to God and to ourselves. The course is available on DVD, with this accompanying course book. It is ideally suited for use within a small group setting spread across two 2-hour sessions, and it can equally be used by an individual following it on their own. Each participant needs their own course book.

The 90 minute film is divided into 6 short modules, covering subjects such as: Tuning In, What kind of Listener am I? Developing a Listening Attitude, Identifying Obstacles, Doorways to Good Listening, and Ideas to Inspire You.

Two tutors are filmed leading the course with a group who are seen discussing and putting the principles into practice. There are also film clips showing different ways of using listening skills within the community.

The course is interactive, so participants are invited to pause the film at various times in order to take part in the discussions/

activities. The course can be led by anyone accustomed to facilitating a small group, and guidance for the group leader is provided in the notes.

Acorn Christian Healing Foundation

Acorn Christian Foundation is a Christian charitable organisation which has at its heart the belief that good listening is a powerful resource for healing in our fragmented world. Our vision is to equip individuals and organisations to become 'beacons of healing and wholeness'; and there are a number of courses and resources available under each of these areas.

Acorn's subsequent listening pathway (usually led locally by our volunteer trainers) builds on the material in ***JUST LISTEN!*** and offers further skills-based training in reflective listening. This is a disciplined, safe and very effective method of listening, quite distinct from counselling. It allows the person speaking to find their own solutions. Not many of us are natural born listeners – but the good news is that everyone can learn!

If you would like to know more about the work of Acorn, please email us at info@acornchristian.org and we will be happy to help you.

May God bless you as you experience ***JUST LISTEN!***

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NOTES FOR COURSE MEMBERS

Welcome to ***JUST LISTEN!*** As you start this listening course, you are joining a large number of people from all over the world who want to become better listeners at home, in their churches, at their places of work and wherever they find themselves in the company of others.

This book is to be used in conjunction with the film, which comes as either a DVD or video. If you are following this course on your own, then we recommend that you pause the film when invited and follow the activities described in this book. If you are part of a group, then you will have a leader who will guide you. If you are the leader of the course, you'll need to read carefully the leader's notes that are clearly marked.

You have in this course book summary notes of the teaching material in each module, and also guide notes for the various activities that you will be doing. From time to time you will be invited to turn off or pause the film, for group discussion or listening practice, according to the course notes. The course is best done over two sessions, following three modules for each session.



PRACTICAL NOTES FOR COURSE LEADERS

Your tasks for this group are to:

- Make the practical arrangements for the course such as venue, TV equipment etc.
- Run the DVD, stopping it at the appropriate times for the group activities
- Encourage group members to open their course books only when invited to do so on the film
- Lead the group in discussions, prayer or listening activities

Course Length

JUST LISTEN! is a course of 6 modules usually run in 2 parts of approximately 2 hours each:

Part 1 Modules 1-3

Part 2 Modules 4-6

The film part of each module varies in length from between 11 to 18 minutes. You need to allow around 10 to 15 minutes of group activity after each film module (depending on how talkative your group members are!)

Group Size

JUST LISTEN! is primarily designed to be used by a small group. An ideal number is around 10, but it can be anything between 2 and 15. Once it becomes larger than 15 it is getting difficult for

participants to see the TV screen and also it is too big for some people who feel shy about participating in a group event. You will therefore need to meet in a home that is comfortable and has the necessary TV equipment that can be easily seen by the group.

Your role as Leader

The primary role of the course leader is to be a facilitator, not a teacher. The main information in the course will be conveyed by the tutors and presenter on the film, and the notes in this course book. The leader's task is to play the video or DVD for each film module, stopping at the end, and then leading the various activities which have clear instructions in this course book. It couldn't be easier!

Four areas of activity

You will find there are four areas of activity featured in this course, which are as follows:



TEACHING SUMMARY

There will be a summary in this book of the teaching for each module that picks up the main points from the tutors on the film. These provide useful resource notes for the students.



GROUP DISCUSSION

There will often be discussions after the film modules, and the notes will provide you with questions to help get the discussion going. You should allow 10-15 minutes for the discussion time. Sometimes the presenter will give the questions, and these will be repeated in the notes.



LISTENING ACTIVITY

After Modules 2 and 5, the group participants are asked to break into twos to listen to each other. Clear instructions are provided for the leader.



HOMEWORK

After Module 3 the group are invited to do a bit of work before they meet again for Module 4. This assumes you are doing the course in two parts. Guidance is given for those doing it differently.

Beginning and Ending

It is up to the group leader how you start or finish the meeting. Many will like to start and/or end with prayer, and also to provide refreshments.

Timetable

So, to give you an idea of what a typical group meeting might look like, this is how the course might work if it was run as two 2-hour sessions:

TIME PLANNER - Part 1

<i>Duration</i>	<i>Activity</i>
<i>15 mins</i>	<i>Group members arrive/hot drinks available</i>
<i>5 mins</i>	<i>Welcome by course leader with opening prayer</i>
<i>16 mins</i>	<i>Module 1: Tuning In – watch film</i>
<i>10-15 mins</i>	<i>Group discussion</i>
<i>18 mins</i>	<i>Module 2: Sharpening the Focus – watch film</i>
<i>25 mins</i>	<i>Listening activity and discussion</i>
<i>11 mins</i>	<i>Module 3: A Listening Attitude – watch film</i>
<i>10-15 mins</i>	<i>Group discussion</i>
	<i>Closing prayer</i>

TIME PLANNER - Part 2

<i>Timing</i>	<i>Duration</i>
<i>15 mins</i>	<i>Group members arrive/hot drinks available</i>
<i>5 mins</i>	<i>Welcome by course leader and opening prayer</i>
<i>10 mins</i>	<i>Group reflection on homework</i>
<i>14 mins</i>	<i>Module 4: Identifying Obstacles – watch film</i>
<i>10-15 mins</i>	<i>Group discussion</i>
<i>17 mins</i>	<i>Module 5: Doorways – watch film</i>
<i>25 mins</i>	<i>Listening activity and discussion</i>
<i>13 mins</i>	<i>Module 6: What Next? – watch film</i>
<i>10-15 mins</i>	<i>Group discussion</i>
<i>5-15 mins</i>	<i>Closing prayer/meditation</i>



MODULE 1: TUNING IN

Listening in a noisy world



TEACHING SUMMARY

Listening to God

You may have noticed that we live in a pretty noisy and fast moving world, constantly bombarded with every kind of sound from the environment and from other people rushing around us. In the first module of this programme we look at how we can learn to cut through the noise and train ourselves to become better listeners: how to tune in and really listen, firstly to God and then to the needs of those around us.

Our starting point on this course – and something that is a central focus for all Acorn teaching – is the principle of listening to God: learning how to slow down and tune in to him, developing the skill of 'listening prayer', to reflect before God, to remember why we are here and to ask for his help. If you jumble up the letters in the word 'LISTEN' you get the word SILENT! In order to listen we need to stop talking, to learn how to be silent.

The film presents a meditative version of Psalm 23. Watch this and see how God speaks to you through it.



KEY LEARNING POINT *If we want to be effective listeners the best way to start is to learn how to listen to God*

Prayer

Good Shepherd, show me my need of you today; help me lie down in green pastures. Come and restore my soul.

Good Shepherd, show me those to whom you would have me listen. How can I show them something of your peace, your still waters?

Good Shepherd, guide me in your paths of righteousness; show me those ways in which I need to become a better listener.

Lord, help me to be open to receive your great love, that I may hear the needs of your world. Amen.

Listening – a vital gift for a noisy world

The ability to really listen to other people is a VITAL gift in our noisy world. We can often be aware that we live in a very noisy world – constantly surrounded by and exposed to sounds of every kind. But if we are to listen carefully and attentively to every sound that reached us we would probably go mad very quickly! We would be completely overloaded. So how do we cope with all the noise around us?

We all have a very good inbuilt defence mechanism for this: from a young age we learn to very skilfully 'tune out' those noises we don't need to listen to. We train ourselves not to hear them, to simply ignore them. At the same time however, we also have this amazing ability to 'tune in' to sounds that are important to us and give them our full attention. Think of that experience we've all had when we are in a busy room and we catch our name being used in a conversation that we are not part of!



KEY LEARNING POINT *Being a good listener is a vital gift in a noisy world*

One of the things this course offers is the opportunity to examine our own personal tuning in and tuning out mechanisms - and in particular how this affects our dealings with other people. The principle is this: it is possible for us to learn how to apply these in-built tuning abilities to the needs of other people around us, so that

we can really listen to them and hear what is being said. And if we can learn to do that, our listening skills become a gift – a real asset – to others around us in a needy and noisy world. We are aiming to genuinely listen when someone needs to talk about something important.

GROUP DISCUSSION



Break into small groups of 2 or 3 and talk for about 10 minutes about how you 'tune in' and 'tune out'. You may like to use the following questions.

1. What are the sounds you tend to automatically 'tune out' without thinking about it?
2. What sounds do you find yourself automatically 'tuning in' to?

Now come back as one group and compare your experiences together. If anything struck you from the film, mention this as well.

When you have finished discussing this topic, turn the film back on again for Module 2.



MODULE 2: SHARPENING THE FOCUS

What kind of listener am I?



TEACHING SUMMARY

The focus of listening

We have recognised this ability we have to 'tune in' to individuals who are talking to us. We now take this a bit further and think about how it is possible for us to have a different listening focus in different situations. We are going to think about WHO is the focus of our listening in any given situation. We are going to look at three possibilities:



KEY LEARNING POINT *Who is the focus of our listening?*

1) ME-focussed listening

A lot of our interactions with one another are what we call ME-FOCUSSED LISTENING. That means that although I'm listening to someone else, my main focus is actually on myself; in other words I'm listening to get information for myself. That is not necessarily a bad thing, but it is important to at least recognise that ME-focussed listening is one-sided.

2) WE-focussed listening

WE-FOCUSSED LISTENING happens in everyday conversations. It is a situation where there's a mutual exchange of facts and information, including thoughts and feelings. It is a bit like a tennis match where words are being batted back and forth between the

two people talking. The focus is no longer just on me, but on both of us, with both of us (hopefully) gaining from the exchange and perhaps some kind of relationship being established.

3) YOU-focussed listening

This is where the focus is no longer just on me, or on the both of us, but when it's purely on you. It's not about what I need, nor about what we need, it's about what YOU need.

Perhaps it's one of those times when someone really needs to talk about a situation that's bothering them. We can sense that the other

person has something important that they want to talk about and we make a deliberate choice to lay aside our own needs so that we can offer them the space they need to talk it through. This kind of listening is a very self-less way of responding to someone. We are not looking to satisfy something in us, but we are choosing to give to someone else, to serve them, to tune in to their needs.

Most of us probably find that ME-focussed and WE-focussed listening comes fairly naturally. Focussing our listening energy away from ourselves and very specifically onto others is much harder. However, learning how to become a YOU-focussed listener - and practicing and developing those skills - is what this course is all about.



KEY LEARNING POINT *Recognising my listening style enables me to choose to change*

Our preferred style of listening

Once we have decided we want to become better listeners and listen in a YOU-focussed way, we then need to pay attention to our own preferred style of listening.

The film demonstrates a number of common styles of listening:

The Juggler – distracted listening

'I'm trying to do several things at the same time as well as listening to you.'

This person listens in a very distracted way. They are juggling several roles at once, trying to listen to what the speaker is saying, but other things are catching their attention too. They therefore only give part of their attention to the speaker, and are likely to miss some of the subtleties of what is being said.

The Pretender – pretend listening

'I'm giving the appearance of listening but actually I'm pretending and eventually you'll catch me out.'

This person's mind is really on something else. They may be pretending to listen in order not to upset the speaker, but of course it can become obvious after a while that they are not really listening – they are likely to be caught out in the end, possibly by giving an inappropriate response to something the speaker has said!

The 'Hurry Up'-er – impatient listening

'I'm willing to listen, but only if you hurry up.'

This person really doesn't want to spend time listening to the speaker unless it is on their own terms. They listen, but interject with comments that indicate they are trying to hurry them up.

The Rehearser – switched-off listening

'Half of me is listening to you, the other half is switched off because I am rehearsing what I'm going to say to you when you've stopped talking.'

This person doesn't properly listen to the speaker. They hear a bit of the story, and then switch off in order to think of helpful things to say. They have only heard a little and are more interested in making their own point than listening to the full story. This kind of conversation can end up as little more than a series of disconnected statements. While the speaker is talking, the listener simply rehearses what they are going to say when the speaker pauses.