

# Listening Prayer Guide

By James Choung

This is a step-by-step article on guided listening prayer -- both for Christians and for those who don't yet follow Jesus.

## Set-up

The set-up requirements are low—there are only four key things:

1. **Keep the lights on.** I don't want to create something out of the ordinary here, and don't want to give any impression of emotional manipulation when it comes to listening prayer. I want it to feel as normal as possible.
2. **Stop the music.** I will also ask the band not to play anything, so that people can hear God in silence for the same reason as #1.
3. **Ask people to stand with their palms up.** In Hebrew and Christian spirituality, the mind and body are one. Having them stand helps them be more alert and attentive, while the palms-up posture signals reception to whatever God might say.
4. **Give permission to opt out.** I might say something like, "If at any time you feel uncomfortable and want to opt out, that's okay. God won't force anything, and I won't either. I encourage you to try it out, but I also give full permission to opt out."

## Prompts

Follow one of these four scripts, depending on what kind of prompt you'd like to give. In Judges 6:11-18, God greets us and gives us a name. In Ezekiel 37, God speaks to the dry bones in our lives. In Mark 10:17-31, Jesus offers us something we didn't have. Finally, in an open-ended prompt, we meet Jesus in a room, and he gives us a gift.

### 1. Judges 6:11-18: Name Change

- I want you to imagine in your mind's eye that you're in a shallow pit made out of rock. It's wide enough to give you some room, but at the same time, it's tall enough so that you can't see over the edge. You're in a winepress. And you see scattered sheaves of wheat lying all around.
- What are you thinking? How do you feel?
- For some reason, you reach up to touch your forehead, and you feel that something written it. You realize that it's a name you've been carrying all your life. It's a name that you know isn't from God, but it still has defined you.
- What is the name on your forehead? (At this point, if I'm in a large group, I may invite people to share the name they have on their forehead out loud, one at a time.)
- As you're thinking about your name, God shows up in the middle of your situation. He is right there with you in the winepress.
- What does he look like?
- He comes up to you and greets you.
- How does he greet you?
- Then he comes up to your forehead, and wipes off the name. Instead, he starts to write a new name. After he does that, he stands back, and tells you what your new name is.
- What is your new name? (At this point, if I'm in a large group, I may invite people to share the new name they received from God—out loud, one at a time. I'd also encourage everyone to say

“Amen” after hearing each name, as an affirmation and a way of standing with that person in prayer.)

## 2. Ezekiel 37: Dry Bones

- In your mind’s eye, you have been transported to a valley. It’s a big one, parched and cracked. And as you look around, there are bones -- very dry bones -- strewn all around you.
- What are you thinking? How do you feel?
- As you look at the dry bones, you get the sense that they represent something in your life. It could be a place of failure, confusion or even something that feels like death.
- If you could name it, what would it be? (At this point, if we’re in a large group, I may ask people to share out loud, one at a time, what the dry bones represent for them.)
- While you’re looking at the bones, God shows up.
- What does He look like?
- He comes up to greet you.
- How does he greet you?
- He tells you to say something to the bones. It’s a word from God that you are supposed to say to them. It’s clear that God is with you.
- What do you say? Then what happens? (At this point, I’ll let them take the scene where they want to, rather than forcing them to have the dry bones be filled with life.)

## 3. Mark 10:17-31: Rich Young Ruler

- You are in a crowd of people, and you’re thinking about the purpose of your life. It feels weird to be in this crowd: on the one hand, you are dealing with a question that really is about you, and yet you are in a crowd full of people.
- What are you thinking? How do you feel?
- You know that you have something that has kept your full attention. In our passage, he had great wealth. But for you, what is the thing that keeps you from fully following Jesus.
- What is it? (At this point, if we’re in a larger group, I may ask people to share what is the thing that keeps them from following Jesus fully, one at a time, out loud.)
- Now picture that as an object in your hand.
- Can you see it? What does it feel like?
- As you look ahead, you see Jesus in the middle of a crowd. There’s a circle around him, and he’s teaching.
- What does he look like? How does he sound?
- He sees you from afar, and makes a beeline toward you. You can tell in the look in his eyes that he loves you. You haven’t felt that kind of love before.
- How does he greet you?
- He notices what you have in your hand, and motions to have it. He wants you to give it up to him. Are you willing?
- What do you do next?

#### 4. Open-ended:

For a scene that is more open-ended than a Scripture-based scene, you might use something like this.

- You are sitting on a stool in a small room. It's dimly lit, with only a soft glow coming from a light overhead.
- What are you thinking? How do you feel?
- You look up, and you notice there's a door in front of you. It opens, and there, standing in the doorway, is Jesus.
- What does he look like?
- He comes into the room and greets you.
- How does he greet you?
- You notice that he's holding something in his hands. It's a gift. He lifts the gift gently in your direction and you're meant to take it.
- What is it? Are you willing to take it?
- Then, he bends down and comes close to your ear. He whispers something to you that he's been wanting to say to you for a long time.
- What does he say?

#### Share

Ask the group to share what they saw with each other. Are there any shared themes or motifs, or does someone resonate particularly with an image? It's okay if some people didn't see anything.

After a while, close the time in prayer, thanking God for speaking to us and asking for him to make what we saw clearer.