

**SOUL SISTERS 2**

12 sessions on learning to

hear God and share graciously

Baptist Women of Ontario & Quebec

The theme of *Soul Sisters 1* was learning to listen well to each other. *Soul Sisters 2* focuses on improving our ability to hear God, and learning how to encourage each other with what we hear.

We will try a few new Spiritual Formation Practices: one is called *Palms Down/Palms Up* and another is called *Lectio Divina*, which simply means divine reading. We will also gradually increase our time of silence to five minutes, as we work toward having a peaceful soul at rest.

If you haven’t done Soul Sisters 1 yet, we recommend you start there. You can download your free guide at baptistwomen.com

Additional resources can be found in *live* magazine and at baptistwomen.com

Gather a group and let’s begin!

*Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works*

*(Hebrews 10:24, ESV)*

*SESSION ONE: Reconnecting*

1. Welcome back! Begin by renewing your commitment to confidentiality.
2. Review the practice of silence: For these few minutes we don’t pray, we don’t try to figure things out; we rest in God’s grace. (See also *Soul Sisters 1*, page 4.)
3. Facilitator, please ask a volunteer to read ***Palms Down/Palms Up***. Then guide them through the practice and go directly into silence for 2 minutes.

Say Amen when time is up.

1. Check in:

Go around the group, say your name and answer the following questions. (Everyone else just listen.)

* **On a scale of 1–10 how have you been over the last few months?**
* **Tell us about 1 key thing that happened.**

1. Share your answers to the questions for this session.

For each one:

* Read the question.
* Let one person answer while the others listen without comment.
* Pause. Take a few deep breaths. Let what they said sink in.
* Continue until everyone has had a chance to share while the others listen, pausing after each one.

1. Questions for this session:

* **What are your hopes for the next few months? For the next few years?**
* **What things make you anxious? How do you manage that?**

1. Pray for each other: Divide in pairs. Ask God for guidance and then pray as many blessings as you can for your partner. (Think about health, family provision, fruitfulness etc.)

*Decide when you will talk next*.

***Palms Down, Palms Up***

Sometimes doing something physical can help us make an equivalent spiritual change. This ancient practice is designed to help us release our worries to Christ.

1. Close your eyes and hold your hands out in front of you with the palms facing down. Silently name the fears, frustrations and burdens you are carrying one by one. Perhaps there is someone you are worried about; perhaps you have a relationship in conflict. What is causing you stress?

2. As you name each item, pray to release it. (e.g. Lord, I entrust my child to you; I give you my fear about this medical appointment.) Imagine God’s hands held out and ready to receive what you are letting go.

3. Then, slowly turn your hands over. With palms up, pray to receive whatever God has for you. Sit quietly for a minute of two.

*Cast all your worries on him, for he cares for you.*

*(1 Peter 5:7, TLV)*

For slightly different versions try http://www.ronparrish.com/blog-post-three/ or

https://www.waterfromrock.org/2013/04/15/palms-up-palms-down-2/

SESSION TWO: *Connect through Scripture*

1. Welcome.
2. Remember to keep your answers to two or three minutes each so everyone has a chance to share.
3. Pray and invite the presence of Christ. Ask Him to draw near. He promises that if we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us (James 4:8).

Have 3 minutes of silence.

1. Work on *listening slowly*.

* Pause after people speak so they don’t feel rushed. Perhaps they have one last thought to add.
* Then if one or two people want, they can ask a question to draw out more of the story. Remember not to give advice or jump in with your own experience.

1. Questions for this session:

* **Tell us about a time when God spoke to you through a particular scripture. What was the verse? What did He say?**
* **Looking back over your life, what period has been most fruitful?**
* **Why do you think that is?**

1. Pray Scripture over each other in pairs.

You can use Isaiah 61:3,4 or another verse if you prefer. (See *Soul Sisters 1*, page 7 to review how to pray Scripture.)

We would love it if you pray for Baptist Women too (e.g. staff, board, events, resources, finances).

SESSION THREE*: Hearing God Speak through Scripture*

1. Welcome.
2. Observe 3 minutes of silence.
3. Facilitator: Please ask a volunteer to read the inset on ***Lectio Divina****.*
4. Guide ***Lectio Divina*** usingJohn 10:1–5
   1. **Share what God highlighted for you today in these verses**
5. Questions for this session:
   1. **What questions do you have about learning to hear personally from God?**
   2. **What makes you nervous about this subject?**

*(Note to the facilitators: Prepare women that this session is designed to bring out questions – not answers. We will gradually come to answers over the rest of the sessions.)*

1. *Secret supporter*: Divide into pairs. Share a special prayer request with each other. Pray now. Keep it confidential. Pray for your partner regularly over the next few weeks.

*Facilitators, please note that you will need sticky notes and a pen for every participant for the next session.*

***Lectio Divina***

This is simply Latin for divine reading. It is an ancient way of reflecting on Scripture.

1. Choose a short passage from the Bible.

2. Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word.

3. Read (or listen) to the passage slowly 3 times, pausing between each one.

*First time*: Imagine the scene. What does it look like? Sound like?

*Second time*: Which word or phrase are you noticing most?

*Third time*: How could that word or phrase apply to your life? What might God be saying?

For more information on hearing God through Scripture, see *live* magazine March/April 2019.

SESSION FOUR: *You Have Heard God Speak*

1. Welcome.
2. Silence: Try 4 minutes if the group feels ready.
3. Facilitator: Please ask someone to read *Learning to Notice.*
4. ***Lectio Divina***: Continue on from last time with   
   John 10 :14–18

* **What words or phrases stood out to you? What might God be saying to you?**

1. Sticky note exercise:

* **What ways has God used to speak to you? Write as many sticky notes as you can.**
* **Mix the notes and choose someone else’s. Explain how you have heard in the same way.**

1. Pray.

**Learning to notice**

As you listen to the stories of others (in this session and others), you don’t want distorted hearing. These steps help you to notice emotions that could cause that.

1) Take some deep breaths. Waiting gives us a chance to notice something in ourselves.

2) Notice any thoughts or feelings their story stirs up in you. Later you may want to think about these thoughts and feelings some more: *Where did they come from? Are they related to unresolved things in the past? Perhaps they reawaken dreams for the future?*

3) Try to ask the speaker questions that are not from your own reactions, but that draw out their story.

SESSION FIVE: *Being Led by God*

1. Welcome.
2. *Palms Down/Palms Up* led by facilitator, followed by several minutes of silence.
3. Facilitator: Please ask someone to read *Learning to reflect back*
4. Questions for this session:

Take turns answering the following questions. Try to have at least 1 person reflect back after each person shares.

* **Describe a time when you experienced direction from God. What helped you see it was from God?**
* **Describe a time when you think you (may have) missed the direction of God.**

1. *Pray for your spiritual leaders.*

Make a list (e.g. pastor, pastor’s wife, pastor’s children, head of deacons/elders, other leaders)

Divide those names among yourselves and pray for them now.

Pray for them during the next weeks.

**Learning to reflect back**

After each person shares, see if one person can respond in the following format:

1) This is what I heard you say . . .

2) This is what it invoked in me . . .

*SESSION SIX: Questions: The First Step Toward Learning*

1. Welcome.
2. Deliberately relax before you enter into silence:
   1. Close your eyes; take several slow deep breaths. Remember*: In Him we live and move and have our being*
   2. Notice where you might be holding tension. (Neck hunched? Shoulders tight? Brow furrowed?)

Enjoy 4 minutes of silence.

1. Check in: **Share one verse you read last week. What stood out to you?**
2. Questions for this session: After each person shares, make space for 1 or 2 people to ask a question to draw out more of the person’s thoughts and experience.

* **What is 1 question of faith you have always wondered about?**
* **At what point in your life was your faith strongest? Why do you think that was?**

1. Divide into pairs to meet again with your *secret supporter*. Any news on the requests you shared last time? Anything new? Think about the things they have been sharing over the last few sessions. Pray for God’s blessings in these areas.

*SESSION SEVEN: Looking Outward*

1. Welcome.
2. Enjoy 4 minutes of silence.
3. ***Lectio Divina*** with Luke 11: 9 – 13 (the parable of the Good Samaritan).

* Who is your neighbour? *(Close your eyes and ask God)*
* What is one thing can you do to bless that person this week? *(If no one specific came to mind, choose someone you do not know well.)*

Advance notice: Next week we will ask how it went ☺

1. Facilitator: Please ask someone to read *Sharing Scripture with each other*.

**Sharing Scripture with each other**

1) Pray and ask God to show you something to encourage another person.

2) As people share their answers, pay attention to a verse or phrase that comes to mind.

3) Filter the verse/phrase. If it blesses and doesn’t break a confidence, then gently share it with them.

4) If no verse or phrase comes, that’s just fine. Someone can reflect back what was said.

1. Questions for this session:

* **What is something someone has done for you that made you feel cared for?**
* **What are some doors God has opened for you?**

As people share their answers to questions, ask God if there is a verse He would like you to share with them.

1. Pray Scripture over each other.

SESSION EIGHT: *Let’s Get Real*

1. Welcome
2. Silence. Ready to try 5 minutes? Try the exercises to relax from Session 6.
3. **How did it go with your neighbour: What did you do? How did they respond? Is there a next step you can take?**
4. Questions for this session:

* **What is one weakness you struggle with?**
* **What are some of the consequences? What steps could you take on the path to overcoming it?**

1. Activity:

Take a few minutes for each person to write their lists. Go around the group so everyone can share a few items from each list.

List 1: Five Things that Make Me Impatient

List 2: Five things that Make Me Feel Loving and Kind

To end the activity, facilitator asks:

**Which list reveals the times God is calling us to be patient? Why do you think that is?**

1. End this session with **Guided Prayer** (led by facilitator):

1) Read Psalm 103:10-12. Choose any translation. For convenience NIV is in the box.

2) Then as people’s eyes are closed, gently read the following prompts, leaving space between each one. (Even 10 – 15 seconds is fine.)

* + Think about how forgiven you are—every single sin forgiven, nothing missed.
  + Think about how clean God has made you—white as snow, clothed in righteousness.
  + Think about how restored you are—no matter what happened in the past, God is still able to do amazing things in your life.

3) To close say: Hear what God says in Isaiah 43:19 ESV: *Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.*

*He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*

*Psalm 103:10–12 (NIV)*

SESSION NINE: *Healing the Past*

1. Welcome.
2. Before you begin your time of silence, invite several people to read a favourite Bible verse. Pray, giving yourselves afresh to God. Then enjoy 5 minutes of silence.
3. Facilitator: Please have someone read *Learning to Discern.*
4. Questions for this session:

* **What loss have you experienced in the past?**
* **What is one regret you have about your past? (What do you wish you had done differently? Not done?)**
* **Describe your perfect future.**

As each person shares:

* Pray that God will bring a verse or phrase to someone to encourage the speaker.
* If one comes to you, go through the *Learning To Discern* steps before speaking.
* If no one thinks of a verse or phrase, speak a blessing over that person. (e.g. I pray that you will experience more and more peace.)

1. End this session with *Palms Down/Palms Up* as a prayer.

**Learning to Discern**

* Test what I hear: *Is it true? Is it pure? Is it encouraging? Is it for them, or for me?*
* Test what I say: *What is the most encouraging way to say this?*
* Use tentative language and leave the listener the freedom to decide if it applies. Instead of “*Thus saith the Lord*,” how about, “*While you were talking, this verse came to mind. Does it feel relevant to you? It’s OK if it doesn’t. It might be something for the future*.”
* Test what you receive: If someone shares a verse or phrase with you, you also test it. Does it confirm something God has already been saying? Do you feel encouraged? Drawn toward God? If not, just leave it to one side. If it is from God, He will speak about it again in the future.

We are all learning☺

SESSION TEN: *Meditating on Scripture*

1. Welcome.
2. Invite the presence of God. Silence for 5 minutes.
3. Check in:

**Share 1 high point and 1 low point since we last spoke.**

1. Learning to **meditate on Scripture**

Take turns reading 1 Peter 2:9,10 from several translations. For convenience the NLT is included below.

Look for one verse or phrase that stands out to you.   
Take a few minutes to individually think about the verse or phrase you have chosen:

* **Repeat the phrase silently a few times, emphasizing a different word each time. What do you notice?**
* **If God was going to write a note to you based on this verse, what would he say?**

1. Let each person share their thoughts from the meditation (2–3 minutes each). For each person, try to have one other person reflect back what they said.

*But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. “Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God’s people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God’s mercy.”   
1 Peter 2:9, 10 (NLT)*

SESSION ELEVEN: *Looking Ahead*

1. Welcome.
2. Silence for 5 minutes.
3. Facilitator: Please ask someone to read *Principles for Peer Spiritual Direction.* This collects the different pieces we have been learning: listening to God, testing what we think we may have heard, filtering what we say. Try it today. We will continue working on it during *Soul Sisters 3*.
4. Questions for this session:

* **What do you think it means to be *called*?**
* **Have you ever felt called to something? Describe that.**
* **If your group had absolutely no limitations (not money, not age, not number of people—not anything) what would you love to see it doing? Describe your dream group.**

1. Pray.
2. Next week is the last session. Do you want to go on? Have you considered forming a Prayer Team? See the *Prayer Network* guide for ideas. You can download it at baptistwomen.com/resources/prayer network.

**Principles for Peer Spiritual Direction**

As each person speaks, try these steps of *Peer Spiritual Direction* all at once:

* **Notice** any memories or feelings of your own that could distort your listening.
* Is there **a question** that could bring out more of their story?
* Is there a **verse or phrase** that God seems to be bringing to mind?
* **Test** that verse or phrase.
* **Offer it as a possibility.**
* Give the receiver a chance to think briefly and respond.

*“Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.” (Provers 16:24 ESV)*

SESSION TWELVE: *We Are All Called*

1. Welcome.
2. Silence.
3. Reread *Principles for Peer Spiritual Direction.* After each person shares, pause, and try to respond with peer spiritual direction.

Questions for this session:

* **What is something God is calling you toward personally?**
* **What steps would you need to take to move toward that?**
* **What spiritual gift would you need in order to do that?**

1. If you are comfortable, after each person shares, invite them to sit in a chair while the rest gather round.

Pray for each other that God would give them the gift they said they would need; pray that He would open doors etc.

1. Decide if you want to continue.
2. Say clear and warm goodbyes.

*Thank-you facilitators! We pray you will be blessed to overflowing.*



Soul Sisters 2 is a program of Canadian Baptist Women

**“And let us consider how we may spur one another on**

**toward love and good deeds…” (Hebrews 10:24 NIV)**

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