

# DIS+TRAC+TION

**OBJECTIVE:** To introduce the topic and get to know your students. Then to teach Lesson One.

**OPENER:** Give out the Student Sheet for Lesson One. Have your students rate the list below when it comes to the biggest distractions to learning at school:

- \_\_\_ Smokin' hot boy/girl seated directly beside you
- \_\_\_ Angry Asian martial arts battle in the next room
- \_\_\_ Smell of a dead, rotting frog corpses
- \_\_\_ A dozen giant moths, the size of a human fist, flying around the lights
- \_\_\_ Best friend firing spitwads at your face when the teacher isn't looking
- \_\_\_ Teacher speaks with a bad lisp
- \_\_\_ Power goes out in the entire building
- \_\_\_ Terrible, pussing, itching rash on your neck
- \_\_\_ Someone seated behind you, continually dry heaving during class
- \_\_\_ Your school book is written in a foreign language

**DISCUSSION:** What distracts you spiritually? What are the main areas should we focus on when it comes to our relationship with Jesus?

“Over the next 4 sessions we share together, we will ask 4 main questions to determine whether or not we are ‘distracted’ when it comes to our relationship with Jesus.”

# DIS+TRAC+TION

# LESSON 1

## DO YOU LISTEN TO GOD

*“My soul is consumed with longing for your Word at all times.” -Psalm 119:20*

**LESSON OBJECTIVE:** To help students realize that we worship a God who speaks, and to ask the heart-piercing question of whether or not we listen to Him. Ultimately, the objective is that we would begin or continue a life-long relationship of listening to God.

**LEADER'S NOTE:** *Pray specifically that God would open the hearts of students to be receptive to His word. Specifically pray Acts 2:37, “Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Pray that your students would be, “Cut to the heart.” Pray that they might themselves ask, “What shall we do now?” This lesson will be extremely practical and require intentional follow-up.*

**IDEA:** If someone in the small group plays acoustic guitar, open up the session with a worship song. Then pray that God would give ears to hear. If no one plays guitar, move on to the opener.

**Opener:** **THE WORD FOR HEAR OR LISTEN IN SCRIPTURE IS “AKOUO.”** The word “acoustic” comes from this word. It simply means “to hear,” or “to listen.” How important is listening? Jesus’ first parable was all about listening! In Mark 4, Jesus repeats the idea over and over:

- **His first words to the crowds is, “Listen!” (v. 3)**
- **“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (v. 9)**
- **“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!” (v. 23)**
- **“Consider carefully what you hear!” (v. 24)**
- **“Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could hear.” (v. 33)**

**The word for listen in this chapter is used over 150 times in scripture.** When Jesus tells the “Parable of the Sower,” at one point He even says, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?” (4:13). In other words, understanding how important it is to listen, is essential to understanding truth. We must be good listeners, which leads us to our first question, “Do we really listen to God?” One of the primary reasons we get distracted is because we don’t listen very well.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Studies show that women use twice as many words as men do. To which many women would respond, “That’s because men don’t listen, and we have to repeat ourselves!” Men would say “how can women listen when they talk so much.” We all struggle when it comes to listening.

## Discussion:

- Do you find it difficult to listen?
- What can you listen to for a long time?
- What can you not listen to for a long time?
- What's the reason for the difference?

**ILLUSTRATION:** When it comes to paying attention to Scripture, our senses seem to dull. We get distracted. Two minutes of Scripture and already our minds begin to drift. We prefer the movies instead so we can glue our faces to the big screen for TWO HOURS. What's the difference?

Give opportunity for the students to respond to this observation. The most probable answers will include:

- Good listening depends upon a good subject. In other words, if the subject is boring (i.e. calculus ☹), then listening is difficult.
- Good listening depends upon a good presentation. If the presentation of the subject is exciting, then listening is easy. If the presentation is boring, then the subject seems boring.
- Good listening depends on the importance of the information. Even when/if subject seems boring, if it is a "requirement," you pay attention even more. (i.e. upcoming test)

Press these answers a bit to see if they're true. Is it simply a matter of subject? It can't be...we know a God who wallpapers the universe with gigantic stars is more exciting than a Hollywood movie! Entertainment engages our minds in a trance. We lose ourselves in the story.

Is it a matter of presentation of the subject? To a degree this may be true, (i.e. a preacher should never be boring!), but ultimately there must be even a deeper explanation than just presentation!

Do we listen when listening is required (i.e. when a grade or score is on the line)?

\*\*

It seems that our senses are remarkably dull when it comes to listening to God. 1 Corinthians 1:14 says, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."

Encourage students not to shift blame when it comes to listening to God. It's not someone else's fault if I don't listen to God. Ultimately, it's a heart issue.

According to a recent Barna study, about 40% of Christians read their Bible on a weekly basis. Barna goes on to say, “Those people who do read will commit about one hour to Bible reading during the week. Those people will spend more time showering, commuting to and from work, watching television, reading the newspaper, eating meals or talking on the telephone.” Obviously, the Bible is not a high priority in the lives of most people.

A.W. Tozer said, “Much of our religious unbelief is due to a wrong feeling for the Scriptures of Truth...I think a new world will arise out of the religious mists when we approach our Bible with the idea that it is not only a book which was once spoken, but a book which is **NOW speaking.**”

The prophets habitually said, “Thus says the Lord.” They meant their hearers to understand that God speaks continuously in the present. His story is engaging, and we must choose by an act of our will, to daily lose ourselves in His Story!

### **THERE ARE 2 PRIMARY WAYS GOD SPEAKS TO US TODAY:**

1. Through His creation
2. Through His word

The question is: “Are we listening?”

**He speaks through His creation:**

*“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge” (Psalm 19:1-2).*

Do you ever take time to listen to the sky declare the glory of God? Do you ever marvel at the fact that you live in the midst of the Artist’s studio every day?

Imagine being invited by Rembrandt into his studio and refusing to look at his paintings! It would be absurd. But every time we step outside we do the same when we fail to see God in what He’s created. Each new day SCREAMS about the glory of God. Each night reveals special knowledge of Him.

The question is, “Who’s listening?”

*How crazy is it that we’ll choose the glory of glowing computer screen over the glory of God!?*

**Application:** Encourage the students to spend solitude time outside under the stars. 15 minutes alone under the stars has an ability to shift focus off of self and on to something/someone much bigger! If they are tired, warn them that if they fall asleep, you will wake them up by dropping live worms on their foreheads.

Not only does God speak through His creation, He also speaks to us through His word.

### **He Speaks through His Word:**

*"More to be desired are they (God's words) than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:10).*

Reread Psalm 119:20.

**DISCUSSION:** How can David say, "My soul is consumed with longing for your word at all times?" In a different translation, "word" is replaced with "laws" or "rules." How often can you honestly say you long for rules?

**NOTE FOR LEADERS:** *Don't quickly answer this. Have the students discuss why this does or does not make sense. What is David seeing in Scripture that we might not be seeing?*

Rules make the game fun! Where would we be without rules?! Sports would be ridiculous. Football would be really odd if there was no "out of bounds." Imagine basketball without refs to call fouls! It would be a totally different sport: Basketbrawl! Why does David "long for God's rules, all the time?"

**Read the Parable of the Sower in Mark 4:1-20.** Before you read the parable, explain the following terms:

1. The **Sower** = the one who shares the word
2. The **Seed** = the word of God
3. The **Soil** = the hearts of the people

Point out the 4 types of dirt in the parable. (Note: Every single person in your group fits one of these descriptions).

#### 1. **HARD DIRT** (VV. 14-15)

The hard dirt describes those who are unresponsive to the Word of God. When they hear the Word, they ignore it or reject it. It goes in one ear and out the other. Jesus says that what takes place is that Satan takes the Word away before it sinks into their hearts, just like a bird would grab the seed before it goes into the soil. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 gives a similar image, "The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

#### 2. **SHALLOW DIRT** (VV. 16-17)

The shallow dirt describes those who receive the Word initially. As soon as they hear the Word of God, they respond in a positive manner. However, the soil is shallow, and when hard times come, they quickly fall away. Essentially, their attitude is, "This is not what I signed up for...I quit." This type of soil is often characterized by an emotional response without true repentance. For many, it's a parroted/imitated faith that is flimsy when it comes to truly living it out. A cut flower placed in the ground is a good image of this type of response. It may look good for a little while, but since there's no root, it will die away quickly.

### 3. CLUTTERED DIRT (VV. 18-19)

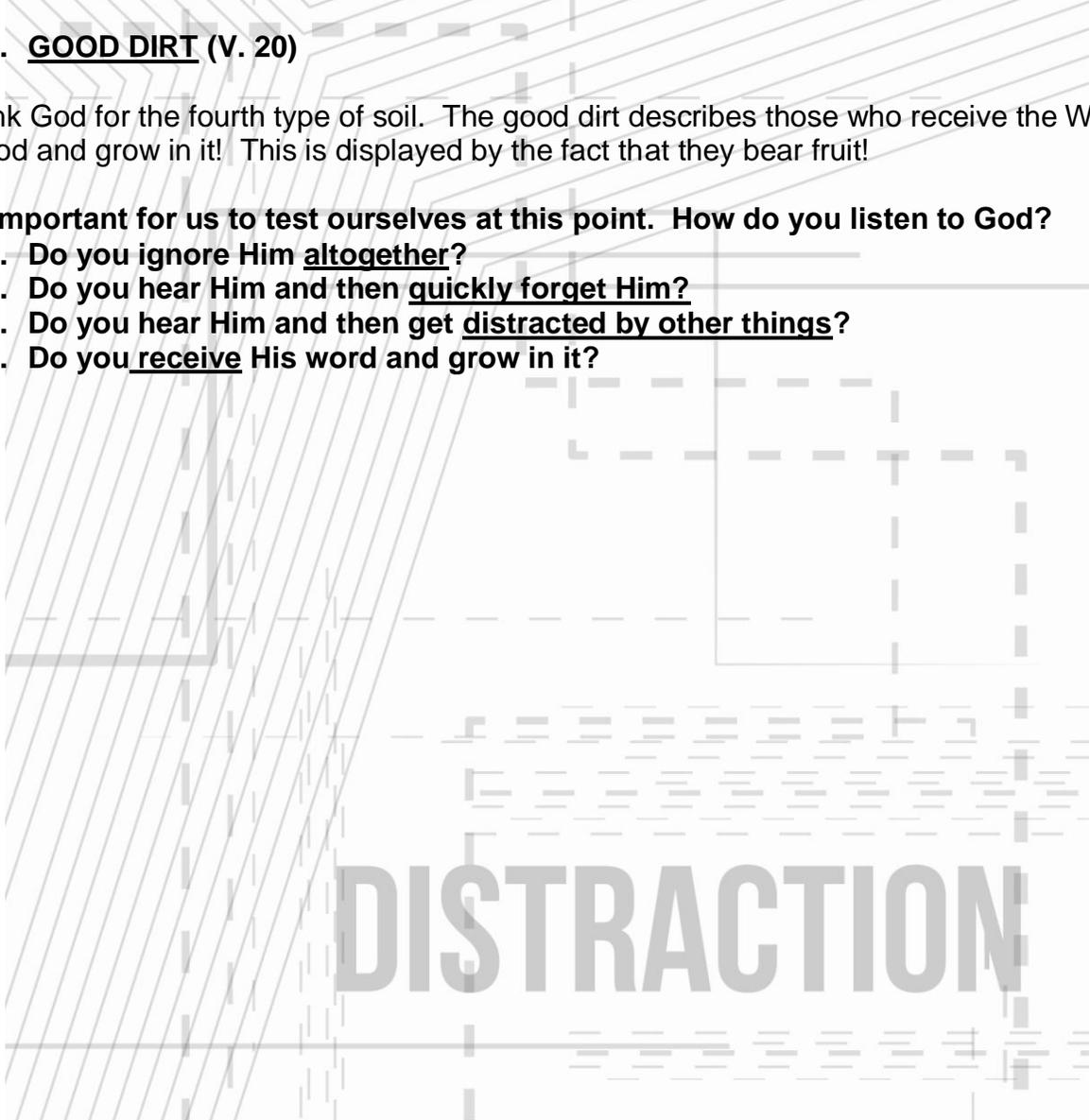
The cluttered dirt also describes those who receive the Word initially. However, they're not the same as the shallow dirt. The cluttered dirt tries to serve two masters. There's already a resident in the soil that they don't want to get rid of. Jesus said in another place, "No one can serve two masters...You cannot love God and money." You can't serve two masters! When our hearts seek God *and* something else, it simply will not work. God won't be reduced to a *small part* of our lives. He won't be shuffled off into a convenient corner. He is our source of life! What happens with the cluttered soil? The Word of God that falls here is choked out by the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things. In other words, it doesn't last. (Note: a couple of clear examples from Scripture are Demas in 2 Tim. 4:10, and the rich young ruler in Luke 18:22-23).

### 4. GOOD DIRT (V. 20)

Thank God for the fourth type of soil. The good dirt describes those who receive the Word of God and grow in it! This is displayed by the fact that they bear fruit!

**It's important for us to test ourselves at this point. How do you listen to God?**

1. Do you ignore Him altogether?
2. Do you hear Him and then quickly forget Him?
3. Do you hear Him and then get distracted by other things?
4. Do you receive His word and grow in it?



**DISTRACTION**

# STUDENT SURVEY DO YOU LISTEN TO GOD

1. Who do you listen to? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Whose opinion counts the most to you? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Whose approval do you seek and/or whose rejection do you fear?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do you listen to God? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Which type of dirt was the best description of you? (Hard dirt, shallow dirt, cluttered dirt, or good dirt)? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What steps will you take to grow in the area of listening to God (check one or more)?
  - Read 5 or more verses of the Bible each day.
  - Memorize a verse each week.
  - Read a devotional book.
  - Spend time outside in God's creation. Find beautiful places nearby (lake, river, mountain, etc.). Go to those places, sit down, listen and admire God.

If you're not listening to God, make a commitment to spend time listening to Him. Don't fake it. Talk to a leader (even better, ask your parents) about how to have a better devotional life. Ask them to help you make a plan, and set a time each day to intentionally "listen." Who will you talk to about this? \_\_\_\_\_

**CLOSING:** If someone plays guitar in the group, close the session with another song. Preface the song by reminding them again of the word, "akouo," which means "to hear" or "to listen." After singing the song together, close in prayer asking for ears to hear.

**NOTE TO THE LEADER:** You are not done with this session. Learning to listen to God is a lifelong journey. Your students need practical guidance in how this is to be done. More significant than teaching them with words and even providing resources for them, is that you now spend time with them showing them how to listen to God. Discipleship is more caught than taught. Invite them into your devotional time with the Lord to model it for them.

Each of us is called to make disciples. That's our task. Get practical by scheduling times to spend with the students in your small group to help them grow in this area. Meet them after school for coffee, or take them out to breakfast. Now is the time to show them how to listen to God! What a privilege!