Do You Walk With A Limp?
3-Part Series

Part One - Do You Have A Hearing Problem?

The purpose of this study is to make Bible study, reading, even devotions a more meaningful experience. We have a tendency to miss what God wants us to hear.

Caution: Remember, this talk could be spiritually damaging to your students if done with a condemning or conquering attitude. Relax. Be honest and sincere.

Introduction:

"When you read the Word of God, are you truly aware that God is speaking to you? Are you reading with an attitude of sincere desire or is it an attitude of getting a 'spiritual checkmark' for this day? Is hearing what God has to say as important to you as reading the Bible? Then this session is for you. Hear what God has to say to you now."

Discussion:

Ask for students to open up. (If your group size warrants it, divide up into smaller groups. Avoid groups of guys and girls separating. It would be good to delegate groups. It would be a good idea to pre-warn some of your leaders to be honest and open at first to generate some comradery.) Share about when you open the Bible. What do you read ... only O.T. stories, Revelation, the Gospels, the Minor Prophets, or do you follow a devotional book? (Allow about 10 minutes)

Have these passages read:
2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 4:12, Colossians 2:6,7, Ephesians 4:13, Philippians 4:9, 2 Timothy 2:15

Emphasize words like profitable, piercing, instructed, knowledge, learned, handling accurately.

Question: How do you make it work for you by yourself?

1. First: Realize you are not the teacher, you don't make it "work."
2. Pray: Your teacher is the Holy Spirit. Ask God to help you understand. If it's difficulty of understanding, maybe you're relying on yourself too much.
3. R.C. Sproul points out 2 myths in his book, “Knowing Scripture”.
   A. "Myth 1: The Bible is so difficult to understand that only highly skilled theologians with technical training can deal with the Scriptures." But the Bible is not that difficult. It may be any of a few other circumstances that are hindering you.
   B. "Myth 2: The Bible is boring" That's not true. The problem is it's not in full 3-dimensional color. It doesn't have commercial breaks. You must read.
John R.W. Stott, in his book “Your Mind Matters”, says Christians should use their minds because the thoughts of men have the ability to alter or mold their actions. He also says that since Christianity is a revealed religion or lifestyle, one must seek and think. The Bible isn't boring if you think.

Let's check some of the 'noise' or interference around you.

1. **Where are you reading?** Are you reading in the bathroom as you brush your teeth? At the breakfast table with cereal? In front of the T.V. at the commercial breaks during the big game? In bed with the lights out?

   Practically, if you are reading for school work, studying for an exam, or looking over your boy/girl friend's letter—you're paying close attention. Check your posture. If you're lying down chances are you'll fall asleep. You are slowing down your blood flow, not reading a "boring” book. Other things to check: lighting, temperature, activity around you, time allotment (don't be in a rush), etc.

2. **When?** Morning--before shower, before getting out of bed. Afternoon--just after a good meal, just before a backyard football game. Evening--After school studies, when you lay down to go to bed.

   Time has an important role in understanding the Bible. Approach the Word with eagerness and freshness, not a sloppy anticipation like, "ho-hum. . .”

3. **Why?** To please God or man? God wants to be our first motivation and our first joy ... not an afterthought or "oh, by the way. . .” Remember how Christ referred to the Pharisee and the tax collector in the Temple? (Recall Luke 18:9-14)

4. **How are you approaching the Bible?** Do you have sin in your life? If so, confess it so you won't be hindered. This kind of noise is the most interfering. "A humble and contrite heart, God will not despise." Treat the Word with reverence. (Read John 1:1 and show how the Word is actually a part of Christ- His Word--He is the Word.)

**Wrap-up:**

**Warning:** Don't overkill. Too much of a good thing isn't always better. When you sit down to supper, if you pig out, you'll be uncomfortable later and wish you had not gone overboard. The Word is so full, you don't need 10 chapters to find something to think or meditate on. Be practical and yet challenge yourself. Share your personal practices and ask for others to discuss. Close in prayer.

**Materials:**
**Time Alone With God:** Barry St. Clair
**Knowing Scripture:** R.C. Sproul
**Your Mind Matters:** John R.W. Stott
It’s difficult to communicate with others when we don’t talk to them. It is extremely difficult, if not nearly impossible, to communicate with our Father in Heaven (whom we can’t see) our deepest concerns or hurts. As is to be demonstrated in the impromptu mime, works do communicate, but not to the depth (that is our privilege through Christ Jesus) of speaking directly to the Father.

**Advance Preparation:** Have someone else prepared come to the front and mime out a conversation. Have someone else come up to carry on the other part of the conversation.

**Introduction:**

"When you talk to God, do you seem to feel like you are talking to yourself? Are your prayers just bouncing off the walls of your mind? Do you picture God sitting on His throne—sort of mental imagery? Do you ever wonder if there’s some secret to getting your prayers answered? How come some people seem so close to God and I feel like I know God by a third party relationship?"

"These questions and others like them are probably similar thoughts the disciples were entertaining in their minds when they were around Christ. Look at their request in Luke 11, verse 1. The response he gave them is what we will look at from Matthew 6:9-13."

**Discussion:**

“Lord, teach us to pray . . .”

Christ responded, "pray then, in this way." He didn't say this is the rote prayer, but rather, pray along these guidelines.

Use your imagination. Just imagine if the only time you talked to someone, they said to you, "Hi, how are you. Good! Hope things are going better! Well, I'm late, so I gotta run. Have a good one!" You could just bypass that person any time you saw them because you'd know what they would say before they said it. Many prayers are along this line. Some priests actually cannot pray unless they have a prayer book. Imagine talking to a friend and every time you asked a question they referred to a list of pat responses so as to not anger you. If I were being talked to in such a manner, I'd get very irritated.

"Lord, teach us to pray ... " probably came off to Christ like, "Lord, show us how to talk...." But since prayer is so important, not a flippant conversation, it must be held with respect.

Back up to verse 5 of Matthew 6.
**Pray not as the hypocrites:** Who are you praying to? Who are you? Remember, you are praying or talking to a Holy Authority, not just a friend. However, you have been given the right to ask anything according to His Will (Matt. 7:7-12). You may have an entire crowd around you, but you are praying to a lofty God. He is not impressed with your knowledge or vocabulary. He wants your heart.

In fact, Christ, knowing the hearts of men, says to go to the other extreme -- pray alone and in secret. Was he saying public prayer is wrong? I think not. Our Lord prayed publicly on the cross, before healings, before Lazarus' resurrection, etc. All through Acts people prayed in groups. No, rather I think the intent was to be dealing with pride. Don't pray publicly if this is a problem. Secondly, in verse 7, mean what you pray. Be sincere in heart. Don't use meaningless repetition.

Now, let's look at the actual prayer. John MacArthur shows what the relationships we have with the Father by this type of prayer are: (from *Jesus' Pattern of Prayer* by John MacArthur, Jr.)

"Our Father" means we have a father/child relationship with God.
"Hallowed be thy name" means we have a deity/worshipper relationship with God.
"Thy kingdom come" says we have a master/servant relationship.
"Give us our daily bread" means we have a benefactor/beneficiary relationship.
"Forgive us our trespasses or debts" means we have a Savior/sinner relationship.
"Lead us not into temptation" says we have a guide/pilgrim relationship.

These relationships are all tied into one and are ours by grace.

MacArthur further divided the prayer into 2 parts: 1. God's glory; and 2. Man's needs.

1. God's Glory
   A. "Our Father" - This statement shows dignity and reverence. Christ always prayed to the Father. He never asked men to pray to Him, but placed Himself beneath the Father. He never prayed to the Holy Spirit, but implied that the Father delegated the Holy Spirit to direct men to pray as Christ did to the Father. Understand that this is the role of the Godhead. Christ is still praying to the Father on our behalf; we also ought to address the Father in prayer. When we talk to our earthly Father, we might say, "What's up, pop?"

   B. "Who art in heaven" tells us why we give Him dignity. How would you address the most important person you know? With respect, undoubtedly. Now, if you didn't know him at all, you would probably ask for an autograph and tell a few lies--"This guy is a great friend, we go way back" (clear back to Adam). But if you did know him and he asked you to come over and talk to him, you'd probably still talk with honor and respect, but you would talk, I'm sure.

   C. "Hallowed be thy name" - Holy, uncommonly special, separated and above all is Your Name. How often we or others use His name in a vulgar or casual way! This phrase suggests that we are worshiping Him. Even His name is great! We must forget ourselves and acknowledge His supremacy. Give Him the honor due Him.
D. "Thy Kingdom come" - Actually this means "Christ reign, here and now." How's this possible? Begin with you. You're the one praying. Is Christ reigning in you? Check out who your activities of life center around. Is your focus on Christ's glory or yours? As you evaluate, you should be able to tell if "Christ is reigning" in you. In order for Christ to actually reign while bodily present with the Father, His impact and rule must take place through you and me, His children.

E. We pray "Thy will be done" because it isn't being done on earth. Satan is the god of this world and people are perishing--not God's will. Destruction and death are not God's will, are they? Yet, death by murder is rampant. Just look at abortion. To say that God's will is ludicrous. We must be compelled to ask that His will be done that He might allow it to. Our prayer has a value. God has given us the obligation to petition Him. Will it change His mind? I can't claim to know. MacArthur says "I don't know ... prayer does work, and if you don't understand how those fit together, don't let your theology destroy your prayer life." On the other hand, we need to ask God to do His will not to change Him, but us or our attitudes toward Him. Prayer isn't to change God, but to change our minds and understanding of Him.

2. Man's Needs

A. "Give us this day our daily bread"
This phrase shows a joint effort by man to say we are all dependent on the One who supplies our needs. This statement is not limited to basic meals, snacks and food. It includes all human bodily needs. God cares about our bodies. But let's look back. Why do we pray this? To God's glory! "By giving us our daily bread, forgiving us our debts and leading us, God hallows His Name, brings His kingdom, and does His will on earth." (MacArthur, p. 88). He wants to know what you need in your life so He can be glorified by answering it or providing. Realize, not everything our selfish minds conceive is actually of benefit to us, so God may not allow it, but that shouldn't inhibit our prayers--just tell us the importance of evaluating our prayers.

B. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"
shows a mental provision. God will forgive confessed sin. A stipulation is tagged on and should not be overlooked. We are required to forgive others who sin against us. In the same measurement with which you forgive, you are asking God to forgive you. See Matt. 7:12. This is the reason for us to live 1 John 4:7-8. We must be able to forgive others. Name them and pray for them. Then go to them. God will be glorified if you do.

C. "And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil."
This is the spiritual side of God's provision. We are asking God to guide us with His Holy Spirit. If we try living on our own without the guidance of the One who can see, we will stumble throughout our lives. But, if we ask His guidance, we glorify Him and allow Him to reign in our lives.

Wrap-Up
Ask for questions. Maybe now would be a chance for you (or a worker) to teach a student how to pray. The logistics are started, don't miss the opportunity to pray. Break up and close in one-on-one prayer.
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Part Three - Are You Nearsighted?

The topic of this session is a root problem. It is a wrap-up for the other two sessions for that reason. People don't have a proper perspective of themselves in relation to a perfect and holy God. The purpose of this session is to point out the problem and give biblical teaching enabling them to know how to handle it. Other titles could be suggested for this area. "How Big is Your God?" has been a popular title of our perspective of God.

Advance Preparation:  Prayer!  The possibility of misunderstanding is very possible. Although the teaching is not difficult, it is a tough concept to grasp.

Introduction:

"Whenever I want to truly see something in full detail, out of habit, I squint. Maybe it's because there's too much light. Maybe because there's not enough. Usually the problem is with me. I can't see too well. I use glasses. I don't wear them all the time, so when they are off I squint. This helps me get a clearer picture. If I’d walk closer to the object, I could focus easier without straining my eyes. But, sometimes that's too easy."

"We often would spiritually rather stand and squint from a distance than walk closer to God. Tonight, we're going look at the handicap of nearsightedness."

Discussion:

"How do you see God?"

Stop and place yourself amidst a crowd of on-lookers. A parade is going by and you are not sure what it's all about, but you've heard rumors. In Luke 19:1-10, a crowd of people had gathered (evidently along the streets of Jericho in a parade fashion), to see a great man--Jesus the Christ--pass by. Many, if not most of the people, were skeptical but some must stand on the street. Let's look at 4 different people who looked at Christ that day.

1. Those who stand from afar and squint:

There was probably a group (maybe near the Temple) of men who were looking on, but were hoping more people were looking at them. They were a stone's throw from the street but they could see. Their curiosity was more along the lines, "No man could make such claims." But they wanted to see. Too proud to go to the street, they stayed back and squinted. After He passed, their eyes hurt so they withdrew to a darker place (in the Temple) where their eyes could relax.
2. Those who stood off, but used glasses:

I don't know if binoculars were around then, but let's suppose they were. These people were more imaginative. They had heard great things about this man and wanted to really see him, but they were late because of other priorities. (In fact, they planned it so they could get out without being stopped to talk—much like some people who sit in the back pew at church). They could see him very clear, but their idea of sacrifice was to have food served to them on a plastic plate rather than a silver platter. They wouldn't dream of actually putting forth effort to just see God.

3. Those who stood on the street:

People were pushing and shoving to get a look. The boundaries were self-established as Christ didn't send men ahead to clear the road so He could pass. In the crowd people were ready to make some minimal effort, but without chance of embarrassment. They didn't want to stand alone. Some were pushed to the front, but they fought back, not to be identified.

People in this group were being pushed or pulled, shoved or dragged, but they followed in a crowd.

4. Those who stood alone:

One man actually dared to be singled out. He went out on a limb by trying to see Christ, but he didn't care. He just wanted to get close. His idea of sacrifice was to do anything possible to even touch Him. Christ acknowledged this one over everyone else in the crowd and said, "Zaccheus, come down here, for today I must stay at your house."

The rest of the crowd, although for prestige purposes had secretly wished to be thusly singled out, started making accusations and remarks against both Christ and Zaccheus.

Application:

Which group do you fit in?

1. Are you looking at God by squinting? Hebrews 12:2 says to fix your eyes on Jesus, but if you are squinting, you'll get tired or frustrated. Is pride why you stand so far off? Are you just "into" Christianity because of your friends? "It's the thing to do!" If that's your attitude, you need to walk and take a closer look. Christ is desiring a personal one-on-one relationship/friendship with you.

2. Perhaps you are looking through a telescope. You can see well the characteristics, but you can't touch or be touched. These people are typically "well-churched" people. They know all the answers, but are lacking any close relationship with Christ. In a sense, these people are skeptical of Christ. They as well as the group to follow, will trust Christ because it seems right. But they lack a joy of a daily walk with Christ.
3. Maybe you are in the crowd. You could possibly be fighting to get out of it and people are dragging you down. These people want to be close to God, but just aren't able. They seem to run into road blocks as they strive after God. It may stem from inconsistent quiet time, but that's not the problem. You still don't see God the way you ought to.

4. Or are you in the fourth group? Are you standing all alone? If you are, don't look around you. You'll become self-conscious or lonely. Look at Christ. Zacchaeus did and Christ motioned for him to come down. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you," James 4:8. It is our initiative. If you wish for God to help you continually, focus on Him--reach out your hand so He can lift you up. You must make the effort.

**Problem of Focus:**

1. Have you ever tried seeing something in the ocean? Objects are blurred or light is refracted. Things are not as clear as if you were looking at it under normal conditions.

2. You must realize that as a believer in Christ, you have died to sin. You are no longer under its hold. (See Rom. 6:1-14) Yet, still, you must choose to throw off the shackles of sin. Sin is like a chain on you. When you accept Christ, you are freed, yet you still must stand and let sin's influence fall from you.

3. From Gal. 2:20, you also must realize that by becoming a child of God, you must die to self, pride, personal success, and ego and live for Christ. That's the clear picture! I must decide daily to die to my desires and reach up for God to draw me near. How can I reach? Ask God in prayer. Read in His Word. Obey what He tells you and you are reaching.

4. Why not decide right now to start reaching?

**Wrap Up:**

You may have a revival. Have some counselors ready. Make sure they are people in touch with the youth. Close with a time of commitment and prayer, then sing a couple of choruses and then close. If they linger around seek them out and be ready to talk.