

## **User's Guide – Highly Sensitive**

Generally, highly sensitive people have more difficulty sharing things that are meaningful, things of the heart. Having spent a lifetime being dismissed, minimized, or simply ignored makes you hesitate.

These materials are provided both to assist in sharing in a group setting or for an individual working alone with the material to get the most good from it.

My suggestion is for groups may use the following questions for sharing times. Individuals may use them as material for journaling, then in the group setting share whatever they feel comfortable. The bottom line is that *everyone* shares *something* each time the group meets!

### **Group Format Suggestions:**

1. Each individual is asked to share what they are comfortable in sharing as a result of answering the chapter questions.
2. Share with the group if you had a strong reaction to something in the chapter, either negative or positive. It is possible that if you had this reaction, someone else did as well. Your sharing will model that it is safe to share in this group.
3. Assign one or more questions to individuals or groups (divide the larger group into smaller units of one or two persons depending on the size and makeup of your group).
4. This last format is much more intensive and requires commitment on the part of participants and leader.
  - a. Commit to the discipline of daily working on the chapter assigned
  - b. Daily spend 15-20 minutes in scripture (this could be scripture included in the text of the chapter.
  - c. Daily spend 15-20 minutes meditating on the scripture and journal what you hear

- d. Daily spend 15-20 minutes in prayer (I often write my prayers in my journal)
- e. Write a summary of the week. Include
  - i. How many days you were faithful to your commitment—no excuses, simply how many days this week!
  - ii. The high point or the low point of the week
  - iii. What was the Lord saying to you through this week's chapter/through the scripture
  - iv. Before writing the summary, fold your paper in half. Use ½ for your summary and leave the other ½ for your reader to write what he/she hears from the Lord.
- f. Summaries are submitted to the group facilitator, or one the group chooses. They are read and prayed over. The reader, whether the group facilitator or one so designated, listens to what the Lord would say and writes what they hear on the summary and returns it to the owner.

For all those of faint heart . . . if this sounds overwhelming and totally impossible to do, I want you to know that it took me a year and a half—yes, count them! 1 and 1/2 years!—before I could say that I was faithful each week! So, if you don't keep your commitment one week, do not give up! This is what discipline is about, building stamina and perseverance, and holding each other to their commitments!

If some moans and groans like a camel, that is fine. Those are feelings working their way out—they pass! The Lord knows all about camels. But if they start spitting like one, well, that is another matter entirely!

Your group may come up with another format that fits them better. If so, let me know and I can add your format to this list!

The following pages contain questions that will help you work through the material in each chapter. For groups, pass out the “homework questions” as you assign the next chapter so that members have the questions in hand as they read the chapter.

Take as much time to work through a chapter as your group needs. For example, I know of one group that spent two to four weeks on a single chapter because the material either exposed or confronted issues of many within the group.

Encourage everyone to allow the material to soak deep into their spirit. Don't rush through the material to simply "answer a question." Rather, read and allow the material to impact you. Then go back later to answer the chapter questions.

## Chapter 1 — Welcome to My World!

1. Visit the website of Elaine Aron and take the Self Test  
<http://www.hsperson.com/pages/test.htm>
  - a. What was your score?
  - b. Did some of the characteristics of the highly sensitive surprise you?
2. Share an experience in which you thought something was “killing you” that you could not define or understand. Did you assume that the feelings originated from you?
3. Explain burden bearing in your own words.
4. What part does empathy play in burden bearing?
5. List the three essential elements that make burden bearing possible.
6. How have you reacted to your sensitivity? Are you a fixer, or an avoider? What is your escape of choice? Do you have a “sanctum sanctorum where you can go to be alone with God?
7. Where in your body do you carry tension? You can expect that burdens will be stored here as well.

## Chapter 2 — How We Learn

1. Share your David and Goliath story, i.e. a time when you felt you were up against unbeatable odds, but God came through for you.
2. Identify how you learn best—visually, auditory, or kinesthetically. Recount a time when you were sure you heard for the Lord. How did God communicate with you? Was it through your dominant learning style, or another mode?
3. As you work through this material begin the note when you become aware that you are carrying a burden. Journal the who, what, when. Be sure to date the entry so that when you receive feedback you can record answers to prayer! Also note the avenue by which you became aware of the burden—i.e. were you alerted by visual, auditory or kinesthetic means—see it, hear it, or sense it?
4. What did you find of help or comfort in this chapter, why? Where did you identify?

## Chapter 3 – Learning To Discern

1. Which of the spiritual gifts listed in I Cor. 12 do you see in your life? Have you asked for the Holy Spirit to give you a spiritual gift, or to be baptized in the Holy Spirit?
2. After reading what some of my “tells” are, identify as many of yours as you can. It may be helpful to have a separate page in your journal titled Burden Bearing Tells. As you identify additional ways the Lord calls your attention, you can add them to your list.
3. If constant fear and worry are an ongoing problem for you, see if you can unravel the burden from your own emotions. Ask someone in the group to help if you need help. Share your story with the group.
4. Does one or more of the “not so obvious” signs resonate with you? Write up a brief account of a time the Lord called you using your not so obvious signs.
5. Referring to the section on the types of burdens that we are not to pick up: are you aware of the Lord guiding you away from such burdens? What was your experience?
6. Begin the personal baseline by making a “Personal Values” section in your journal. List as many things that you value as possible. You might make categories, for example:
  - a. Personal (here I would put beauty, music, art, tidiness)
  - b. Relationships (I place great value on family, a handful of trusted friends)
  - c. Time (I value punctuality and planning ahead so I am not rushed)

Go back over these values as you work through the book. Add to them, or you may want to change or refine them as you go. Note times when you are

“not yourself. In what way(s) were you not yourself. What value was being bent or broken?”

## Chapter 4 – Doing it Wrong!

1. After reading this chapter, what did you find most helpful or brought some comfort? Why?
2. Recall an incident when you think you “wore” a burden instead of bearing it to the cross.
3. Which rude Philistines do you find yourself contending most often?
4. Which characteristics of unredeemed burden bearing are now red flags for you? Lack of courtesy? Emotional heaviness? Bone grinding exhaustion? Other?
5. Which spiritual disciplines do you practice? What additional discipline would help you grow and mature in Christ and build your confidence in your hearing of God? Are you ready to commit to adding it to your present walk with the Lord. Identify people to whom you will be accountable.
6. Are you an introvert or extrovert? What are the ways that you “show respect” for your design? Is there a place you can go for refuge? Are there ways you set time aside to refuel?

## Chapter 5 — Hearing God

*God is restoring something He never took away—your ability to hear Him personally.*

1. How did you come to know the Lord? How did you first “hear” Him?
2. Of the ways listed that God speaks, which of these have you experienced? In your journal cite an experience for each way God has spoken to you. Share in the group what you feel comfortable sharing. Your experience may affirm or validate someone else.
3. What is your favorite way to “hang out with Jesus?” Has Jesus begun to expand the ways He calls you to be with Him? Remember to look for His fingerprints on your days!
4. Have you ever made a study of the character of Christ? Would now be a good time? Do you have a friend who will take up the study with you? (This will be an ongoing study!)
5. Four reasons are given for God to speak: for salvation, for encouragement and strengthening (building up), for comfort, and to work the character and nature of Christ into you. Give an example of each.
6. Identify those to whom you can turn to test what you hear. Where do you find your community of faith? Are you comfortable talking with your pastor? If not, is that something you need to pursue?

## Chapter 6 — Blocks to Hearing God

1. Several reasons for God not answering when you ask were given in this chapter. Did you find it helpful to know that God may have had a valid reason to not answer? Journal your experiences where you asked God questions and He did not give any answers. Share with the group, or a friend.
2. Have you had the experience of your hope and trust being battered? How did you come through that experience?
3. Have you experienced “hearing or seeing” a false Jesus? How do *you* test to make sure you hear from the “True Jesus?”
4. The following list is drawn from the chapter. As you read through each section, ask the Lord to shine His light and reveal what may have been hidden from your awareness. Journal what He reveals. Take as much time as you need and do not hesitate to find a counselor familiar with inner healing for help!
  - a. Mental block
  - b. Heart block
  - c. “I can’t” attitude
  - d. Generational or church issues
  - e. An expectation that you project onto God
  - f. Fear
  - g. Shame
  - h. Dishonesty
  - i. Strongholds (intellectualism and a religious spirit are two very powerful ones, and often team together!)
  - j. Disappointment with God

- k. Burdens carried needlessly (unredeemed burden bearing)
- l. Strong emotions such as anger—check for judgments and inner vows.  
If the Lord indicates that there are judgments and vows, do not  
hesitate to find a counselor familiar with inner healing to help!
- m. Strong personal desires can block your hearing of God.
- n. Bitterness
- o. Negative self-image

For those using these pages for a group study, there is far more material here than can be shared with a group, so ask the Lord to highlight what He would have you share.

Sharing with a group and being listened to with respect and care is healing.

Pray for each other that your capacity to hear God will be enlarged. Look for Him to give you experiences of hearing Him which will grow your confidence. The attitude of expectation and anticipation helps to open the hearing. Ask the Lord to protect and seal the growing ability and confidence.

## **Chapter 7 — Trust**

Identify as many “yes Lord’s” or “but Lord’s” as you can. Ask the Lord to show you what you put before obedience, and why. What does He want you to do about it?

Your ability to trust intertwines with your ability to share things of the heart. The Lord may reveal areas of hurt that hinder your ability to share as you work through these questions. Meditate, talk it over with someone, pray, and then do as the Lord directs.

### **Communication Inventory**

1. Who are the people I avoid? Why do I avoid them? What is the history behind this? Who do I need to forgive, and for what?
2. What areas in my life do I find difficult to discuss?
3. Why am I afraid to communicate about these areas?
4. What happened to make me fearful?
5. What was the message of such experiences?
6. What did I learn from them? What do I believe as a result?
7. What do I fear will happen if I talk about such experiences?

## Chapter 8 — Boundaries

The following questions may help you locate subconscious boundaries you did not realize you had, and find boundaries that need repair. And, they may suggest places boundaries need to be. You may find you want to move a boundary.



### **No Trespassing!**

1. List as many boundaries as you can. These are your lines in the sand!
2. List areas where you think you may need to make, move, or repair a boundary. The following questions may help you locate these.
3. Which boundary(ies) do you experience being transgressed most often?
4. When do I feel used, imposed upon, violated? Ask the Lord to reveal what boundary is being violated when you feel this way. Work on defining the boundary, and then talk it over with someone you trust. Ask the Lord and your friend to help you keep your boundaries.
5. When do I find it difficult to say, “NO,” and to whom? Talk this out with a friend and try to find the roots; i.e. any judgments or inner vows that may be fuelling the behavior or attitude.
6. Find your ground to stand on. Write out what you will say to keep/defend your boundary. Memorize what you will say, for challenges will come!

## Chapter 9 — Identity

You form a picture of self from what you see in the faces of those who raised you. From the picture of self flows the *sense* of belonging. The following questions will help you analyze that picture. You may encounter more judgments and inner vows. Keep the phone number of your prayer counselor handy!



1. As a child, what did I see in other's faces?
  - What was the basic emotion?
  - Was the face blank?
  - If the face was hard to read, what did that mean to me?
  - Did the expression change when our eyes met?
  - Today when I see a face that is hard to read, how do I feel?
  - What does it mean to me today?
2. What message(s) about belonging or not belonging did I receive from the face(s)? Try to put the message in words.
3. Did my spirit receive a different message than my conscious mind?
4. What did I believe?

You form a picture of self from what you see in the faces of those who raised you. A *sense* of worth comes from inclusion.

1. What I kept in the loop, or was I the “last to know?”
2. Did I have choices? Did people talk to me, or over me? Could I share opinions? Did I have opinions? Did anyone ask my opinion?
3. How were my needs met?
  - Consistently?

- Inconsistently?
  - Lovingly
  - Harshly?
4. If I expressed a need was it received and an attempt made to meet the need, or if others found out about a need, did they make matters worse?
  5. Lord, help me see what it means to me to have someone need me. Would you like to change what it means to me? How? In what way?

### **Competency —**

1. What am I good at? What do I do well? What do people say I am good at?
2. Is there a way I use what I do well to make up for what I feel I lack in worth or belonging?
3. What part of that is okay, Lord?
4. Is there something you want me to change?
5. Lord, show me the part my self-image plays in fueling performance orientation.
6. How can I make amends to You for ways I have usurped Your place?
7. Show me what delights You about me.

### **Spiritual Family —**

1. Identify as many people as you can in your spiritual community to whom you turn when life is tough.
2. Is anyone in your family of origin unsafe? Is anyone safe?

3. How do you feel about the idea of finding spiritual family?

4. Can you identify a spiritual father figure, mother, sister/brother, aunt/uncle?

## **Chapter 10 — You, the Believer in Scripture**

1. List the adjectives you have difficulty with. You don't/can't see yourself that way.
2. Look at your answers to the identity questions. Compare the scriptures with the negative messages. Do they contradict the negative message?
3. Regularly review the adjectives and the scriptures that seem to describe someone else. Soak in these scriptures as well. This is a way to “wash your mind, spirit and soul in the truth!”
4. List the adjectives and scriptures that you are drawn to. Memorize these scriptures. Share your favorites with your group or trusted friend.
5. Think of the game of “peek-a-boo” that you play with young children. Did you have a peek-a-boo moment this week when you “saw” God and were aware of His delight in your “seeing” Him? Share your experience. Sharing such “glory stories” is a wonderful encouragement to others!

## **Chapter 11 — The Big Reveal**

1. Can you, and do you want to commit, or renew your commitment to embrace burden bearing as your spiritual fitness program?
2. Try to put words to how you feel about your sensitivity of spirit. Has that feeling changed as you have worked through this material? In what ways?
3. Create an “elevator ride” explanation of burden bearing (approximately 90 seconds, the average time in an elevator!)

### **Where do you go from here?**

1. Keep practicing what you have learned!
2. Practice discernment. The more you do it, the better you become at it! Part of learning is doing it wrong!
3. Practice spiritual disciplines. They feed your spirit and will sharpen your discernment, your hearing of God, and deepen your relationship with Him.
4. Keep a prayer journal so you have a record of your burden bearing.
5. Continue to seek inner healing for hurt as the Lord reveals the need. But do not obsess over healing—don't dig up the entire backyard of your life to find every little root! Life is a journey, a transformation, an extreme makeover!
6. Ask the Lord to help you develop an accountability group.
7. Look for His fingerprints in every day.

**Issues you will continue to work on:**

1. Discernment which involves hearing God and being confident about what you hear
2. Trust of God, others, and yourself.
3. Boundaries—spiritual, emotional, special
4. Identity
  - Deficits in self worth are remedied by inclusion
  - Deficits in belonging are remedied by having needs consistently met