

TALK #1

SPIRITUAL LISTENING

Talk is 20 minutes, and the Family Group practice is 30 minutes

HANDOUTS: There is a handout that follows this Talk Outline. You should have the Family Group facilitators pass it out before you start the talk.

PURPOSE: To impart some of the basic skills of listening as a means for ministering to one another in this environment. Listening is the most available and easily received gift we can give to another human being. We honor them as individuals and affirm their worth. In times of grieving, we can model Christ for others through the gift of listening.

PRAYER: Kairos Community Prayer, page 11, F.G.

Speaker introduces self, telling name, whether lay or clergy person and gives the name of the talk.

I. HOW MANY OF US WOULD RATHER TALK THAN LISTEN?

- a. Most of us are not interested in the opinion of others. Most of us in a group are watching for an “opening” in the discussion when we can leap in and tell the others “how it really is and how smart we are.”
- b. Listening is not a “natural” skill for most of us.
- c. Wonderful things happen when we learn to listen to another human being.
 - i. New relationships open up.
 - ii. We become better disciples of Jesus.
 - iii. We are better able to care for our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - iv. A new way of saying “I care for you” is revealed.
 - v. Being listened to reduces feelings of aloneness, of exclusion.
 1. It gives us a feeling of belonging.
 2. It creates bonding between people.
 3. It causes speaker and listener to feel better.

II. SPIRITUAL LISTENING

- a. Spiritual Listening is different from typical listening
 - i. Listen with our heart
 - ii. Place other person above our own need to be heard.
 - iii. Changes the relationship
- b. Keys to Spiritual Listening
 - i. Surrender ourselves to the other person.
 - ii. Pray for them
 - iii. Pray to be open to have caring (agape) love for them.
 1. We will come to say and do right things, because we will come to understand the nature of another’s pain.

III. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DO SPIRITUAL LISTENING:

- a. For the person who is doing the talking:
 - i. Their self-esteem grows.
 1. Why? Because someone has taken their life seriously (their thoughts and feelings)
 2. Their thoughts get clarified.
 - a. Presenter cites example from own experience.
 3. Their feelings are expressed, no longer bottled up.

- a. They come to realize something that what they thought they felt wasn't the deepest feeling they really experienced in a given situation.
 - b. Their feelings become clarified.
 - c. Presenter cites example from own life.
 - 4. If listener is actively listening, the speaker feels accepted, as is, warts and all.
 - a. Listener's non-judgmental listening does not necessarily imply agreement with actions speaker reports.
 - b. Presenter cites personal example.
- b. For the listener: Two important things:
 - i. The listener comes to realize that it is a privilege to have another's inner life shared with one.
 - 1. It honors the listener
 - 2. It brings listener acceptance, too.
 - 3. It becomes a gift.
 - 4. Listener has experience of walking or standing on Holy Ground.
 - 5. "God don't make no junk!"
 - ii. After one listens long enough, one experiences a bonding.
 - 1. Listener realizes the privilege of being present to the opening of someone else's heart...
 - 2. To know with judging is to love.

IV. HOW DOES ONE DO SPIRITUAL LISTENING?

- a. First of all, one makes a decision to listen.
 - i. At first, it feels very artificial.
 - ii. It is very hard work, hard enough to make one perspire if done properly!
 - iii. Listener has to put own mind and feelings in neutral gear; suspend judgment; be open to the presence of someone's painful heart.
 - iv. Body posture says, "I'm open, very interested, affirmative, and attentive."
 - v. Maintain good eye contact.
 - vi. Track what speaker is saying on both content and feeling levels.
 - vii. Use oral responses which are affirming, which say, "I am with you..." "I understand..."

V. PITFALLS TO AVOID:

- a. Me-too-ism
- b. Moralizing, preaching, and being judgmental.
- c. Asking a direct question to satisfy listener's own curiosity.
 - i. Being an interviewer rather than the listener.
- d. Giving advice (trying to fix it).
- e. Cheap consolation, "Oh, that's not so bad."
- f. Arguing or disagreeing with the speaker.
- g. Analyzing or interpreting.
- h. Ignoring obvious heavy emotions.

VI. WHAT YOU GIVE AS A SPIRITUAL LISTENER IS AFFIRMATION OF SPEAKER'S WORTH

- a. Good listening is a great gift one can give to another person.
- b. It is also a very great learning opportunity for the listener.
 - i. What the listener will ultimately learn is that, while many people's behavior often is not very good, deep down, there are no real villains in life.
 - 1. There are fallen angels
 - 2. We're all God's creatures and, in his eyes, we are all precious.
 - ii. Jesus teaches us that inside every person, underneath their villain-like behavior, there's a little child with enormous potential to learn about love.
 - iii. Jesus teaches us:
 - 1. That child is precious.
 - 2. That child needs to be loved.

3. That child needs to be set free from the bad behavior patterns which it has developed.
 4. God loves the worst of us.
- iv. Jesus is our model.
 1. Miracles occur when we love those persons who are not very lovable.
- VII. ASK THE FAMILIES TO PRACTICE SPIRITUAL LISTENING