

## “LISTEN TO STORIES” (SPEAKING OF JESUS)

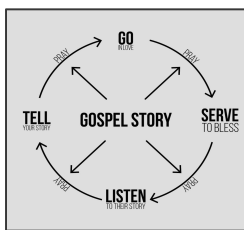
*As we walked to the Cardinal game, a guy came up to us and asked us if we would buy a newspaper. In one glance, you could tell he lived on the streets. My friend stopped, looked straight at him and asked him a question. Don't remember the exchange. I just remember my friend listening to this man. Next thing I knew, we were in a really small restaurant buying this guy a sandwich bc he had not eaten all day. For close to thirty minutes my friend listened, asked a few questions – and shared a few thoughts about Jesus with this man. As we left – he said thanks, we both quickly said sure and as my friend was about to say more he stopped us and said – no really thank you. Thank you for noticing me and listening to me.*

#2- “Many people struggle believing they really matter to anyone – because they don't have many people who really listen to them. When we listen – we say – you matter. When we listen and engage in their story – we offer something greater – the ability for them to engage with holy God.” - Jeff Vanderstell :26.30

Here is the truth God wants us to be moved by and act in today.

#2, #3- **We serve to bless – when we listen to another's story.** In the Word of God, #3- **blessing = anything that draws us into God's presence.** God wants us to see we get to be used to draw another into His presence – as we listen to their story. As we serve in listening - we actually allow another to engage with holy God.

#4- As we continue our series in “Speaking of Jesus”, we are learning that If we are going to engage people with the gospel story it must be more than an event – it must be a way of life. We have said for months – we want God to reshape our culture as His people here at Summit – to be a people who speak of Jesus in all of life. That we would be a people who live our lives with those far from God. Speaking of Jesus: that is engaging people in the gospel story is a matter of actions and words in relationship with another person. This “Gospel Circle” has been a great tool for us in learning this way of life and helping us reshape our culture. **We are learning that love** – the amazing stunning love God has for us – is the foundation and motivator in all this. His love is the only thing that will move us to **GO** & engage, the only thing that will move us to **PRAY**, and the only thing that will move us to **SERVE** others. All these are vital bc they give a real taste and credibility to the gospel story.



The give credibility because these actions are the very life of Jesus – who loved us, prayed for us, and served us – and still does. Because these actions are the life of Jesus, they are a taste of Jesus. They act like salt in our thirsty lives - drawing us to the person of Jesus. We come to one more powerful action in this circle - **LISTENING** to another's story. There are 2 questions we need to answer today -

01. #4- How do we listen to another's story?

02. #4- How does listening to another's story engage them with holy God and His gospel story? (5)

01. #5- How do we listen to another's story? 38

We live in a culture that barely hears each other. We communicate through emojis and broken English in texts, or pictures in social media sites like instagram or snapchat, or one-way thought vomits in places like emails, Facebook and Twitter. **In general, we love to tell and hear ourselves talk but we are horrible at listening!** So, in order to **really listen to others as God listens to us – it begins with recognizing our shared problem.**

• #5- **Recognize, we all struggle with not listening and or being a selfish listener.**

*Some of us struggle with listening to other's period. We do not listen. Some of us listen – but we struggle with being selfish listeners. What do I mean by a selfish listener. Just listening doesn't mean you care. Brian started this convo in our preaching cohort and we all agreed – this is us. The convo – many, not all, but many guys listen on their dates with a ton of mixed motives. We aren't listening purely because we care. We listen because we want you to think we care, we listen because we want you to like us, we listen because we don't want to present ourselves as selfish. Ironic huh! BUTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTT – what happens when people get married and there is no more need to impress? You struggle to listen bc your reason for being uber attentive was selfish – It was about advancing you – not caring for her. The real proof of this comes when a consistent issue in your relationship becomes voiced in this statement – “I don't feel like you are listening to me.” This is not all about guys. This is all of us. My wife will confess – she wants me to listen to her but she is not always game to lovingly listen to me. We all struggle with not listening or being a selfish listener.*

*When we listen, we are basically listening for one of two reasons: 1) I care about me 1<sup>st</sup>. [I am listening to advance me.] Or, 2) I care about you 1<sup>st</sup>. [I am listening to serve you, love you.]* God longs for us to listen to others as he listens to us. He cares for you so He listens to you. He longs for us to care for others – and listen to them.

#5- **Repent and believe: God wants to listen to you and ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to care and to listen through you.** Repentance here: turn from your selfish ways & turn to a loving & listening God.

In order to repent of our non-listening or selfish ways we have to believe God really wants to listen to us.

• #6- Believe that God really wants to and does listen to you and your story. Do you believe this?

*Iceman – I played bball in a tiny college called Trinity in SA and one day we were told before our Sat am practice the S Spurs and the Showtime LA Lakers of Magic and Kareem would be practicing in our gym after we were done. Playoffs – the arena was being reset after an icecapades and they would be in our lockerroom using our floor. I was a little pumped bc G Gervin, the Iceman of the I can finger-roll fame was one my favorite players – a hero. We were leaving (slowly) as the Spurs came in first to practice. I was close to the Iceman and his gang. A few of said, “Hey – sup” and he looked my way and say, “hey” and ... walked right by me to some trainer guy. I thought for one moment he had heard me and was going to talk with me and converse with me – but no. I walked on by (with all the cool I had) and marched slowly into our locker room so I could change and get back out to watch their practice. Being dissed didn’t diminish my worship. Truthfully – I didn’t expect the Iceman to listen to me or want to talk with me. Hero’s do hero stuff – they don’t listen to you. Most of us – if we were honest – have this kind of functional relationship with Jesus. Jesus might be your hero or one of your heros. You have some kind of worship of Him going on. But like most of your heros – you don’t really believe that **He really wants to listen ... to you.***

#6- **ISAIAH 1:18 (ESV)** “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: ...

It’s a profound thought: God wants to listen to me, to you – and hear our story. It is true & it matters. **It is the foundational truth that will move our heart and soul to care for another and listen to their story.**

#7- The story of God throughout His Word says: He cares and wants to listen to us, you!

- #7- God listens to us in our rebellion. (Adam and Eve)

#7- **GEN 3:9 (ESV)** 9 “Where are you?”

- #8- God allows us to wrestle with Him. (Jacob) He questions God face to face - lives and is blessed by God.

#8- **GEN 32:22-31 (ESV)** 26 “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

- #8- God listens in our suffering and it moves our affections toward Him. (David)

#8- **PSALMS 116:1-2 (ESV)** 1 I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. 2 Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

#9- When God came to earth – Jesus, God’s Son – listened to those near and far from Him.

- #9- Roman Centurion #9- **MATTHEW 8:6-7 (ESV)** 6 “Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.”

7 And he said to him, “I will come ...” *The amoral who have abused God and his people.*

- #10- Nicodemus #10- **JOHN 3:1-21 (ESV)** Religious, who complain and question.

- #10- Tax collectors and sinners #10- **LUKE 15:1-2 (ESV)** The worst of the worst were drawing near to him and he eat meals with them. (Which in this culture meant – you matter, let’s share stories - let’s reason together.)

- #10- Two despondent men after Jesus’ death #10- **LUKE 24:1-2 (ESV)** Those who have no hope.

Why does God listen to us – to you?

- All through God’s story – God loves people. Why? *He loves because He is Love.*

- All through God’s story – God serves people. Why? *He serves because He is a Servant.*

- All through God’s story – God listens to people’s story. Why? *He listens because this is who He is.*

*He listens bc He is love, He is a servant and he wants to say to you in his words and actions – you matter.*

#11- “Listening, it has been said, is the first form of loving.” *John Keats – Poet*

*God is not like our heros here on this earth. He notices you, you matter to Him – so He listens.*

#11- As we believe God really wants to and does listen to us – we will be moved to listen to others.

How do we listen like God? Listening is more than just noticing noise. That is hearing. To listen – **is to engage.**

• #12- Engage in their story by asking questions. *This is 1st about engaging in THEIR story. Yours come later.*

- #12- Ask questions that help people tell you the “why” of the story.

*For example – If someone tells you they went hunting last weekend. Ask them about it but get them to tell you the “why”. You can say – sounds like you love hunting – what grew your love to hunt? This helps you engage in more than just facts and information - you really starting engaging with the person. I was talking to a lady the other day who was asking me about my kids and I asked about hers. She told me about her daughter off in college and how she loves to send her care packages. I said – oh man – my wives loves that too. Why do you like to do that?*

Look with me how Jesus did in this Luke 24...

#12- **LUKE 24:13-19 (ESV)** 13 That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

15 While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.

#13- 16 But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17 And he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. 18 Then one of them,

named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" 19 And he said to them, "What things?"

They responded by telling Jesus the why of their story.

- #14- Listen to their story through the lens of the "Redemption Story."  
#14- **Creation** – how it was supposed to be, #14- **Fall** – what is broken, #14- **Redemption** – what will fix things, #14- **Restoration** – what things will be like when they are fixed

Why? The thought is every small story or micro story we are a part of or people are a part of has a common story line. As we learn to hear stories in this way – we can then hear what people are hoping in for their redemption in all their stories. Common redemption themes – *hard work, someone to fix it, hopelessness, etc*

Listen to Cleopas – what part of the redemption story is he sharing hear with Jesus?

#15- **LUKE 24:19-20 (ESV)** 19 And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. **"FALL"**

Sometimes you will need to ask questions to engage people in their small / micro story. Sample "fall questions: "What do you think is the real cause of the mess at work?" "What's the main issue in your relationship?"

Cleopas continues – what part of the redemption story is he sharing hear with Jesus now?

#16- **LUKE 24:21 (ESV)** But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. **"CREATION"**

Questions about concerning how things were supposed to be: "What did you hope the job would be like?" "If this relationship had gone how you hoped it would, what did you think it would look like?"

One last part of his story ...

#16- **LUKE 24:21, 24 (ESV)** 21 "Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. / 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." **"REDEMPTION"** There was no hope. 3 days – spirit is gone. Truly dead and gone. "So ... what do you think it is going to take to fix this mess at work – this mess in the relationship?"

Recap: as we listen – engage thru questions and by listening through the lens of the greater redemptive story. If we are going to really listen and not be a selfish listener – we have to increase our belief that God listens to us. As we see His care and love for us in listening to us – we will be moved to really listen to others. So -

## 02. #17- How does listening to another's story engage them with holy God and His gospel story?

- #17- **Listening to another and their stories says – you matter!**  
Being created in the *imago dei* must mean something for us - the people of God. Being an image bearer of God Almighty makes all people matter to God and in turn they should matter to us. Loving/caring for another by serving by listening - says I see that you matter bc you matter to God as an image bearer of Him.  
*At CHS, I watched Marc Sikma engage this Middle School boy for 15 minutes like he was the only person in the room full of 500+ people. When that boy left – I saw him bear hug Marc. In his hug – was a thanks for noticing me.*  
Engaging people like this boy or the homeless guy I spoke of earlier is incredible and we need to care for those we may never engage again. However, God wants us to learn to do this with neighbors and co-workers and class mates and team mates – etc. We want to build relationships with others and care about them as Jesus cares for us.  
\* *When we care for our neighbor by listening to their story – they get a real taste of Jesus.*  
\* *When you start to build a relationship with your co-worker, that begins by you listening to their story – they get a real taste of Jesus.*  
\* *When you go to lunch with that person you are in class with and you begin to get to know them by listening to their story – they get a real taste of Jesus.*  
**Listening to another's story – allows them a real taste of the loving servant heart of Jesus. And in this taste - they are blessed – they engage the person of holy God.**  
*There is another even more powerful aspect to listening to another's story that allows them to engage with holy God and His gospel story.*
- #18- **When you enter the conversation by asking the Holy Spirit to listen through you, you bring God's presence to bear in the conversation.**  
Ultimately – when you and I listen to people through the power of the Holy Spirit – you are bringing them into the very presence of God – who changes and transforms people.

*This is a story of someone I get to engage with regularly. When we talk, it is often pleasant. More than that – they have really been good to me over the years. But there are other times we talk, when it is not pleasant and it is*

*just a lot of complaining. And that get's hard to listen to. It can make me avoid them. God is in the midst of breaking my heart in this whole matter.* A couple of weeks ago – I was reading Romans 8 – looking at the Story #18- **ROMANS 8:22-24 (ESV)** 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, ... 24 For in this hope we were saved.

\* *When Jesus engaged these 2 men on the road to Emmaus and listened to them- He was listening to his creation groan and allowing them to engage in the great redemption story, the gospel. In their groaning – they were saying – who will fix this, this isn't how things were supposed to be – they are in the story.*

\* *He engages me to when I complain and wrestle. As my God listens he says, “John, you matter I care.”*

\* *When my friend complains and groans – it is simply creation groaning for rescue and restoration.*

\* *In this love and truth – I am humbled. Now when I get to listen - I a reminded I have three choices...*

**1) I can stop listening.** *Close my ears and daydream, start avoiding this person, and live too busy.*

**2) I can listen selfishly.** *(Sound familiar) We will listen with concerned head nods and groans to match their souls groaning so we appear concerned, so I look Christian, so I cover my lack of love or disdain for their life. But all my listening is really to advance my status as a caring person when in reality, there is deep ugly selfishness to my listening OR ...*

**3) I repent - and beg for the Holy Spirit to empower me and listen through me.**

**As I do – I allow another to engage in the Spirit of God and His gospel story.**

**Right now – groan to your God if you need to – he will listen.**

**Then repent – that we don't like listening to others groan – turn to your loving caring listening God.**

**Ask Him to empower us and move us to listen to another's story – WHO? Pray for a name.**

**So, we can allow the presence of holy God and His gospel to engage our friend.**