

## **Devotional: Intimacy through Listening**

I've been married for nearly 18 years. We have 2 great kids together and have built a wonderful life by God's grace and provision. However, this last week my wife shared with me a problem she has observed in our marriage. She stated that over the last few months, she has noticed our communication has become less effective and therefore, our relationship felt less effective. We spent the next few days praying together, reading God's word, and discussing how to build our communication back. The reason we took this so seriously and jumped to action is because we both understand an important truth. Without good communication, a relationship, business, church or ministry, will struggle to be effective and strong.

As we prayed, we came to the conclusion that much of our problem did not stem from the 'talking' part of communication, but rather the 'listening'. How often do we speak to or at our loved ones, or in the context of ministry, those we serve, without taking the time to effectively listen to them?

Moreover, think of your relationship with Christ. How much of our time in prayer is spent asking of God even seeking Christ, without listening to what He may have to say to you!

Today I want to address the act of listening as a significant form of communication. Let's look at the effects in our relationships, our ministry and most importantly, our relationship with Christ.

### **Listening in Our Relationships with Others**

James 1:19 instructs us, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." There is a reason the Bible tells us to listen before speaking, It demonstrates that we value those we are speaking with and includes the other in the process. It fosters empathy, understanding, and connection, which are essential for healthy relationships. It allows us to see a different perspective. Although I've been married to my wife for nearly two decades, practicing this skill has already added depth to our conversations and love for one another.

In our families, friendships, and communities, listening can prevent misunderstandings and resolve conflicts. It opens the door for deeper communication and allows us to respond thoughtfully and with compassion. When we take the time to listen, we reflect Christ's love and patience, building stronger, more meaningful relationships.

### **Listening in Ministry**

In ministry, listening is a powerful tool for effective leadership and service. Jesus modeled this by listening to the needs and concerns of those He ministered to. Whether it was the woman at the well or the blind beggar, Jesus took the time to listen before responding to their needs. This approach made His ministry personal and transformative. Active listening also demonstrates that ministry is a partnership, not simply leaders and followers. Our role as teachers, pastors, or program leads is not to be above but rather coming along side those we serve. This will build trust and be reflective of Christ's love for them.

## The Importance of Listening to God

As I reflected on this weekend, I saw how the same benefits of intimacy can be applied to my walk with Jesus.

Listening is a foundational aspect of our relationship with Christ. Throughout Scripture, we see the importance of being attentive to God's voice. In John 10:27, Jesus says, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." To follow Christ effectively, we must first listen to Him. This means creating space in our lives for prayer and reading His Word, allowing the Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts. I have created a practice over the years of starting my private times with Christ with confession and then a moment of silence. Just sitting in the presence of the almighty God listening. Sometimes I hear nothing, sometimes I get distracted, but more often than not, I feel the presence of Christ. Friends, God wants to not just hear from us, but to speak to us. And he wants to use the intimate relationship we build with Him to impact and influence the way we love our spouses, our children, our classrooms, our workers. God wants to transform our communities by building intimacy. This begins with our relationship with Christ!

This week, we are asking that you take time to practice this. Every day, take a moment to spent time alone with Christ. Examine your heart and confess what sin may be present, and then just sit. Allow God's peace, His presence, His conviction, His joy, whatever He may want to speak to you... allow Him to speak to you before you present your requests to Him.