

How to BLESS Your Neighbor: Listen

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Opening Discussion

- What thoughts, feelings, or impressions do you have about this week's sermon?

B.L.E.S.S.

Begin with Prayer

Listen

Eat

Serve

Story

Scripture

Deuteronomy 6:3-5

"Listen closely, Israel, and be careful to obey. Then all will go well with you, and you will have many children in the land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you. Listen, O Israel! The Lord is our god, the Lord alone. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength."

Psalms 116:1-2

"I love the Lord because he hears my voice and my prayer for mercy. Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!"

Proverbs 2:1-3

"My child, listen to what I say, and treasure my commands. Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding. Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding."

Luke 18:35-43

"As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind beggar was sitting beside the road. When he heard the noise of a crowd going past, he asked what was happening. They told him that Jesus the Nazarene was going by. So he began shouting, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" "Be quiet!" the people in front yelled at him. But he only shouted louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" When Jesus heard him, he stopped and ordered that the man be brought

to him. As the man came near, Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord," he said, "I want to see!" And Jesus said, "All right, receive your sight! Your faith has healed you." Instantly the man could see, and he followed Jesus, praising God. And all who saw it praised God, too.

Thought #1: Listening is an essential part of our relationship with God.

What does it mean for God to "bend down" and listen to us, and how does that impact our understanding of prayer and communication with Him? What does this posture tell us about our role in listening to others?

In what ways can we actively take a posture of listening in our relationship with God? How do actions like leaning in, clarifying, and making eye contact translate into our spiritual practice of listening?

How does creating space and limiting distractions help us better hear and understand God's wisdom and insights, as mentioned in Proverbs 2:1-3?

Reflecting on the story shared about sitting in silence with someone going through a difficult time, why is it often challenging for us to remain quiet and simply be present with others in their pain? How can we cultivate the ability to offer supportive silence?

In Luke 18, Jesus provides practical insight into listening well. How do His teachings in that passage guide us in becoming better listeners, both to God and to others?

Thought #2: Listening requires a willingness to STOP and be interrupted!

Reflecting on Luke 18, how does Jesus' willingness to stop and listen to the voice of the needy man challenge our own tendencies to rush through life without pausing for others?

In what ways do our busy lifestyles and the constant urge to speed up or multitask hinder our ability to truly listen and be attentive to others? How can we intentionally grow a mindset of slowing down and being present in conversations? Share realistic steps you've found helpful in your own life or that you're prepared to try.

Consider these quotes by Ferguson and Bonhoeffer about listening:

"Everyone has a story, but few who will listen to their story."—Ferguson

"Anyone who thinks that his time is too valuable to spend keeping quiet will eventually have no time for God and his brother, but only for himself and for his own follies." – Bonhoeffer

How do these perspectives resonate with your own experiences of being heard or feeling unheard? How can we create spaces where everyone's story is valued and listened to?

The idea of being quick to listen, slow to speak, and considering before responding was discussed during the sermon. How can we practice these principles in our daily interactions, both with God and with the people around us? What challenges do we face in applying these principles consistently?

Thought #3: Listening is about not assuming!

Revisit the quote by Ferguson above and the interaction with Jesus we see in Luke 18. Why is it essential to avoid assuming we know what others need or want, especially in our conversations and relationships?

How does the question Jesus asks, "What do you want me to do for you?" challenge our tendency to jump to conclusions or make assumptions about people's needs without giving them the opportunity to express themselves?

Consider the impact of finishing people's sentences or rushing ahead with assumptions during conversations. How does this behavior hinder genuine listening and understanding? Discuss instances when you've experienced someone assuming they knew what you needed or wanted without asking, and how did that make you feel? How can we create a culture of listening that values individual voices and perspectives?

Reflect on your listening habits and tendencies. What steps can you take to practice active listening, which involves asking questions and genuinely seeking to understand others' needs and desires? How can this improve your relationships and communication skills?

Thought #4: Listening expresses value to the one we are with!

Again, reflecting on the story in Luke 18, how does Jesus' willingness to stop and listen to the blind man shouting for mercy demonstrate the value of listening in expressing care and compassion for others?

Discuss the difference between respect and dignity, as mentioned in the passage. How does listening contribute to acknowledging and honoring the inherent dignity of every individual, regardless of their background or circumstances?

Share examples of times when you felt truly heard and valued by someone who listened attentively to you. What impact did that experience have on your sense of self-worth and connection with that person?

Consider the statement that listening enhances relationships while not listening damages them. How can we cultivate a habit of active listening in our interactions to strengthen our relationships and show others they are valued?

How can we emulate Jesus' example of being present with others and listening well, especially in situations where people may feel overlooked or marginalized? How can listening

