

HOLY LISTENING IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Session One - 9:00 to 10:30

Listening is key to spiritual direction and the conviction at the foundation of what we do today is that love is at the center of listening - love for God, love for self and love for the other.

I Samuel 3:1-10

WHAT IS LISTENING?

Kay Lindahl says it is

A Choice - It is a decision, a choice...

A Gift - One of the greatest gifts we can give.

An Art - It is more than technique. It is being present to something beyond our individual selves.

- ▶ As you are developing your theology of listening, take a few moments to write down what catches your attention about Lindahl's definition of listening. (Listening as a choice, a gift, an art) What resonates with you?

Techniques for Holy Listening

(Kay Lindahl)

- ▶ Become aware of opportunities.
- ▶ Notice what happens when you listen.
- ▶ Notice what happens when your attention drifts.
- ▶ Identify someone who has given you the gift of listening.
- ▶ Choose to give someone the gift of your listening.
- ▶ Recall a time when you experienced listening as an art.
- ▶ As you listen to people in conversation, can you identify those who practice listening as an art?

Listening in Scripture

Deuteronomy 6:4 "Listen, O Israel."

Jeremiah 7:23 "Listen to my voice. Then I will be your God and you my people."

Isaiah 55:2-3 "Listen; listen to me; listen, so that you will live."

Mark 9:7 "This is my beloved son; listen to him."

Matthew 7:14 "Listen to me, all of you, and understand."

Revelation 22:17 "And let anyone who listens answer, 'Come.'"

Hebrews 3:7-8 "The Holy Spirit says, 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.'"

Matthew 13:9 "Let anyone with ears listen!"

Samuel 3:10 "And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'"

1 Kings 3:9 "Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to listen."

John 8:47 "The reason you do not hear the is that you are not from God."

Matthew 7:26 "And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a fool."

John 9:7 "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again?"

Luke 21:38 "And all the people would get up early in the morning to listen to him in the temple."

Luke 10:39 "She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying."

John 18:37 "Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

John 10:27 "My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me."

Reflection

Sit with your experience of reverence in listening for a few moments in the quiet.

Notice what stirs within you.

Write a statement of your perspective on listening as sacred

TYPES OF LISTENING

Contemplative - “Listening to the silence...listening beyond words.

Practices: Meditating with music, walking meditation, centering prayer, simple silence.

Reflective - “about listening for the questions.” (Lindahl)

Practices: Asking “What wants to be said?”
“Three breaths.”

Heart - Listening that connects, listening at the heart level.

Practices: Giving full attention with appreciation, curiosity, and wonder. Listening for what connects.

Psychological Dimensions of Listening

(Nemeck and Coombs)

- ▶ Self-Intimacy - A communion with self that thrusts us into communion with others and especially with God.
- ▶ The recognition of basic differences and uniqueness - We are so fundamentally different and we can only penetrate each other’s world of experience by listening.
- ▶ The capacity to listen to another - The attentiveness of our being to another’s becoming in all their beauty and sinfulness.
- ▶ Intentionality (Nouwen in Reaching Out) - The active process of disengaging from one’s own personal concerns and viewpoints and opening to the personal worldview of another.

THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF LISTENING

(Nemeck and Coombs)

- ▶ Listening together by the director and the directee to God within the directee.
- ▶ Unconditional surrender to Abba.
- ▶ Whether or not anything tangible emerges is entirely God's business.
- ▶ A Spiritual Director gives direction as a consequence of having listened to God within and through the directee.
- ▶ Spiritual Direction is...a way of leading us to see and obey the real Director - the Holy Spirit hidden in the depths of our soul. (Thomas Merton)

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- ▶ Physical Environment
- ▶ Recognizing that we listen from our own unique worldview
- ▶ Beginning in silence
- ▶ Patiently letting storytelling unfold

TECHNIQUES FOR LISTENING

- ▶ Acknowledgement
- ▶ Repetition
- ▶ Paraphrasing
- ▶ Reflective Listening
- ▶ Continuity and Contrast
- ▶ Let there be quiet
- ▶ Open-ended questions
- ▶ Right questions at the right time
- ▶ Closing the time together - “What one thought or idea will you take away from our time together?”

Directee: I’m not sure that having a Calling Program in our church will be helpful. We have had programs like that before and have never worked.”

Director: It sounds as if your past experience makes you feel a bit leery about the value of this program. Am I right?

Directee: Yes, you’re right. We have tried so many different programs and they seem to go nowhere. We have a new pastor but that probably will not make a difference.

Director: I’m wondering if you are feeling discouraged?

Techniques for listening

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ROADBLOCKS TO LISTENING

- ▶ Filters
- ▶ Ordering, Directing or Commanding
- ▶ Warning or Threatening
- ▶ Giving advice, Making Suggestions, Providing Solutions
- ▶ Persuading with Logic, Arguing, Lecturing
- ▶ Moralizing
- ▶ Judging, Criticizing, Blaming, Disagreeing
- ▶ Agreeing, Approving, Praising
- ▶ Shaming, Ridiculing, Name-Calling
- ▶ Interpreting, Analyzing
- ▶ Reassuring, Sympathizing Consoling
- ▶ Questioning, Probing
- ▶ Withdrawing, Distracting, Humoring, Changing the Subject