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Listening Prayer: Hearing the Word OF the Lord FOR Others



BY ANDREW COMISKEY

As lay healers in our local churches, our main objective is to listen, both to the wounded one, and to the Word that God is speaking to him or her. Our task is at once profoundly human and divine. We must first learn to listen effectively to the cry of the one's heart. But our response must be God-breathed.

That means we must wait and listen for God's response to him or her. His touch, His Presence, His Word applied specifically to the expressed need will be far more healing to one than all the advice we can muster.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says it best:

"The first service one owes to others is listening to them. Just as love to God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them. It is God's love for us that He not only gives us His Word but lends us His ear. So it is His work we do for others when we listen to them..."

...Most people are waiting for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians, because these Christians are talking when they should be listening. But those who can no longer listen to others will soon no longer be listening to God either; they will be doing nothing but prattling in His Presence too...

...Christians have forgotten that the ministry of listening has been committed to them who is Himself the great listener and whose work they share. We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God." Life Together

First we suspend advice giving, those quick spiritual band-aids

we apply upon first hearing of another's distress. It is a discipline to not give an answer at first but rather to simply seek to listen.

Our waiting to give an answer gives a person the right to be heard and understood. It does not reduce another's experience to an equation for which we supply the magic answer.

We also should not impose our experience prematurely upon another's. We must first listen in order to discover the unique nature of his or her reality. Only then can we determine what about our story is relevant to another's. Expressing

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"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed"

LUKE 4:18



Steps of Confession

Forsake Denial:

Come out of the darkness created by the lie that your sin is small and insignificant. Allow the Lord to reveal the depth of the damage done through the boundaries you have violated. If needful, write down the sins as you become aware of them.

Confess Your Sin:

Speak it out in the context of the small group. As you speak it out, focus on Christ (May want to use the cross here). Know that as you confess your sin, the darkness and the shame flows out of you and into the Crucified One. For some, it may be helpful to physicalize the prayer and actually use your arms to thrust the sin into the Cross. Confession unto Christ is sin's only one-way ticket out!

Binding Away of Sin into the Cross:

One praying for the confessee speaks out: "I bind the sin away from you and into the Cross," in agreement with the ministry of binding away of sin and loosing of forgiveness that Christ gave to Peter and to the church in Matthew 16:18-19.

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EZK. 36:25

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols."

Listening Prayers:

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how Jesus met us in our struggle is helpful only to the degree that it applies to his or her story.

It is Jesus—not primarily our personal experiences or advice—who is the ultimate solution. Our goal is to help each to discover the resources in Christ and His community that (s)he needs in order to become whole. As a healer, I must cooperate with Christ so that He might increase as Lord and Healer of those I serve.

Listening to God on the Other's Behalf

Having listened to one in order to grasp his or her reality, we then seek God for His Healing Word in response to the need at hand. This too requires a posture of listening.

Following our active listening to him or her, we quiet our hearts in order to hear and impart what God wants to say or do. This is a naked, faith-filled moment; is it any wonder we often bypass the quiet of listening for our self-generated "prattling in the

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Presence?" Still, we resist the temptation and ask: "God, do what only You can do..."

We wait and listen for Him on the premise that He wants to answer the deepest cries of the human heart. Our faith is based on the following:

The Father releases the Healing Presence of His Holy Spirit through His people. He is true to His Word (Isaiah 61:1-3, and Luke 4:18); He wants to restore His people. He pours out His

Spirit to bind up the broken-hearted through the faithful attentiveness of His people who function as conduits of His Healing Spirit.

The New Testament (especially Acts) testifies to how the disciples laid hands on people in order to impart healing, deliverance, spiritual gifts, and simply more of God's Spirit to enable God's people to live out His Will for them. We do the same as healers of the broken.

We employ touch as the medium through which the Holy Spirit imparts healing. The way we touch people matters. If done correctly, it communicates respect; it also conveys the truth that God is reaching out to the person through the hand of another. Given our powerful role as helpers and the vulnerability of those we serve, we exercise the following guidelines:

Ask one if you can lay hands on him or her. *We do not pat, massage, or rub; we place our hands firmly yet gently on one's upper back or shoulder. We are priests, not masseurs. If more intensive touch is required for deeper wounds and needs (e.g. profound lack of sense of being); this must be facilitated by at least two helpers under careful supervision.*

Our healing is always rooted in the cross. *As Thomas Smail writes: "We must go through Calvary to get to Pentecost." When we pray for others, we point to the healing power*



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of the cross. The symbol of the cross is crucial here. It is the place we direct one to go—again and again—to lay down our idols, our agendas, our ideas of self and others, our wounds. Jesus in turn releases to us the same flow of blood and water released at His Crucifixion. (John 19:34) The blood cleanses us from sin and its effects; the water washes away the debris of sin and imparts new life to us. Water in the Gospels represents new life, the truth of who we are as His new creation.

Symbols matter here. We urge the wounded ones to envision

the cross as we pray for them. Often we use oil here, anointing the member's forehead with the sign of the cross. This imprints the cross as the source of healing, and also conveys the Old Testament meaning for oil as a sign of God's blessing, joy, and healing balm. (Exodus 30:25; I Samuel 10:1; Isaiah 61:3; Psalms 23:5) We also use water as a symbol of cleansing and resurrection. Especially during prayers of confession and renunciation, we use water to make apparent the cleansing and release that goes on in the unseen realm as we appropriate the power of the cross. (Ezekiel 36:25; Hebrews 10:22; I John 5:6-12)

Other Keys

Many people struggle with whether or not they can hear from God. We all can! Jesus speaks to us continuously as the Good Shepherd. His Word to us is clear and true: "I am the Good Shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know Me...They will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd...My sheep listen to my voice..." (John 10:14-16; v.27).

God speaks to us to guide and to heal. When we listen on one another's behalf, we will hear His voice. "We simply stand in the confidence that the Lord Jesus wants to talk to us so much that He will get through to us in some way, if we let Him." (Listening Prayer, pp.124, 125)

He will speak to us our language. We all have different ways of hearing—some of us will receive guidance through His still small voice, others receive pictures. Some receive gut-level hunches from the Lord.

Listening to God on behalf of others is an adventure in which we are continuously growing. His Spirit will guide us as we are faithful to listen and humbly impart what we are receiving. Again, we hear others out, actively listening to their cry. We then wait and listen for God's response to that cry.

As we wait for His guidance, we are actually waiting for an impartation of one of the many gifts of the Holy Spirit. I Corinthians 12:7-11 describes many of these gifts, which we impart to one another for the building up of Christ's body; we build that body, one prayer, one broken person at a time.

Some common gifts God gives as we pray include: words of wisdom—particular sight into what God is doing now in that person's life; words of knowledge—precise words about a person that only God knows; gifts of faith and prophecy—powerful, prophetic encouragement that calls a person into his or her higher, truer self (these may also include gentle words of warning or correction); gifts of healing—

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Steps OF Confession

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Loosing OF Forgiveness:

(S)he now speaks out the essential truth—"You are forgiven in Jesus' name by the power of the blood of the Lamb shed for you." Christ gave His disciples the authority to appropriate forgiveness in His name, and by His power, according to John 20:23. For the first time, many are actually able to receive forgiveness from God through the prayers of another.

Cleansing:

Those praying now administer the cleansing of water. Sprinkle water liberally over the confessee in order to manifest the power of Christ to not only absolve sin, but also to cleanse the deep heart from its defiling effects. We need not only washing from a guilty conscience; our bodies need to be washed with pure water as well (Hebrews 10:22). Water functions here baptismally it manifests the crucifixion of the old, and the emergence of renewed innocence through "the One who came by water and blood Jesus Christ" (1 John 5:6).

Blessing the Real Self:

Those praying now anoint the confessee with oil and bless his or her true self in union with the risen Lord. Upon receiving forgiveness and cleansing, we arise in newness of life and take our rightful place as sons and daughters of the most high God. Those praying for us represent the body of Christ, welcoming us into restored relationship with the church. **DSM**

Listening Prayers:

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miraculous moves of God that repair inner wounds instantly; discernment of spirits—identifying specific spiritual strongholds in ones' life that need to be renounced.

God gives these gifts to those praying as He determines (I Corinthians 12:11); our job is to wait, listen, and impart what we receive. Another possibility is that God is speaking directly to the receiver. We can and should ask the one being prayed for: "What is God showing you as we pray?"

After we give what we have received, we want to be sure and give the person the chance to respond to what we (or the receiver) have heard from the Lord. Our words are not entirely accurate; we need feedback as to whether we are on track in our listening. At times, our words will be resisted, not because they are false but because they are either painfully true or not yet graspable by the other.

In any case, we respect the other by inviting him or her

to consider the validity of our offering. In truth, (s)he is free to do with it what he or she wants. It is not our responsibility to impose the gift. That is abusive and dangerous, given that we hear only in part.

If we identify in prayer a particular area of sin, we lead them in the steps of confession. (These are listed on page 3). However, if a spiritual stronghold is discerned, and one is willing, we then lead them to take authority over the darkness at hand. We empower them to renounce whatever is preventing them from moving forward. We are wise to follow up here as well; most strongholds are not broken down in one vigorous prayer session.

Lastly, there will be times when the Lord does not lead us into a particular prayer for the other. When we are dealing with long-standing deprivations of soul, it may be God's will to simply have us abide with him or her. Here the untouched needy soul can receive the Father's love as He extends it through the healing hands of His body. Much can occur in quiet, through

the abiding love of the church for its thirsty member.

This is the pure and simple and profoundly powerful ministry of His Presence. Leanne Payne writes beautifully: "The knowledge that God is truly with us—that it is possible to be in familiar communion with Him—is the primary need of every lonely, suffering soul. Our work as ministers is that of praying "Come, Lord Jesus," and then of inviting each and every soul into the healing Presence." (The Broken Image, p.145)

Healing is all about listening—listening to the wounded one, listening to God on his or her behalf. Through that process, Jesus restores wounded hearts. Embrace the challenge, the creativity, and the reward of the ministry of listening prayer.

For more detailed instructions on Listening Prayer we recommend "Listening for the Healing Word" by Ann Armstrong available through our website—www.desertstream.org DSM

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Mission Statement

Based on the biblical foundations of compassion, integrity, and dependence on God, Desert Stream Ministries proclaims to the world the transforming power of Jesus Christ. We equip the body of Christ to minister healing to the sexually and relationally broken, through healing groups and leadership training for the local church.

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