

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

The Power of Listening

When God called Abraham to go on a journey of faith, God made a promise to Him (and to us): “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing” Genesis 12:2 (NIV).

Those words were not just a promise to him, but to all who come to God by faith in Jesus. God’s intention in Genesis 12 was that the gift of God to you is meant to flow through you. As followers of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is changing the world inside of us to change the world around us. As we go “Into Our Community Together,” we can change our communities by blessing one person at a time, loving our neighbours by using the everyday practices modelled by Jesus.

If we truly hope to bless people around us, we must first get to know them. Any relationship starts with listening. We need to hear about their stories, their hopes, their dreams, and their challenges, which also helps us pray more specifically. Truly listening may be the kindest and most loving gift you can give someone.

What Did You Say?

When we are misheard, words have the potential of causing confusion, hurt, damage, and pain.

There are three basic levels of listening.

- + *Level One* – listening to gain or share information.
- + *Level Two* – listening to respond in conversation.
- + *Level Three* – listening to understand, connect, or empathise with one another.

If hearing and understanding what others are saying is a critical expression of love, how do we make sure we aren't mishearing but listening in order to truly understand another person? Especially those who we are trying to share Jesus with!

Listening to Individuals (Luke 18:35-43)

Stop

Dallas Willard - *"The first act of love is always the giving of attention."*

The first thing we could apply to go to another level of listening is to stop and pay attention to another person. Jesus models a prioritisation of the person and their need over the pressure of the crowd, and He stopped. Stopping to really listen brings value and focus.

Come Near

"He ordered him to come close... as the man came near..." (v40)

Jesus wanted the man in proximity to Himself, so He adjusted and aligned His posture towards the man in need.

Moving towards someone not only tells them that you are making them a priority, but it also allows them to share more openly.

Ask Questions

Jesus didn't make a statement; He asked a question! Jesus modelled a posture of understanding. He knew the importance of understanding before being understood.

Questions affirm the value of the other person, and positions you as a peer and a servant, and opens the door to authentic vulnerability. It helps send a message that "you can say anything – I've come to no predetermined judgments of you or your situation."

Actively Respond

“What do you want me to do for you?... alright receive your sight. Your faith has healed you”. (v42) Jesus’ response didn’t contain anything other than loving people unconditionally.

As we start to listen to people, we are also wanting to be open and actively listening to what God is saying. Listening creates a channel for God’s love and power to flow horizontally between people and vertically between heaven and earth.

It’s in these regular relational moments when we come within arm’s reach of another person and just listen to what is going on in their hearts.

Jesus Listened to Culture – Luke 19:41-42

We can’t be a blessing to the world without also listening to places – the cries of our city. Jesus also modelled to us the need to discern what was going on around us in our culture.

Where you see problems in our city, you will find pain in people!

By looking at our community, listening to our neighbours, we can discover real needs in people. We learn about a person or group of people that really need help.

Our Challenge this Week:

Listen to your neighbour. Stop to give them attention, ask them questions and listen for their hopes and dreams, or fears and needs, and look to see what you could be doing in response. Find out some attributes of your neighbours by taking the time to listen to them.

Discussion Questions

1. Share how you are going, filling in the names of your neighbours on your block card. Share testimony of what might be happening to you or with your neighbours as you have been praying for them.

2. What would it look like if we didn't limit our love based on our judgment of others regardless of what they believe, or how they live their lives.

3. When was the last time you stopped and asked your neighbour how they are doing and then stopped to listen? What was the outcome?

4. Stop and think about our city? Do we see it... really see it? Not just the homelessness, or financial strain... but the brokenness, the hopelessness, the pain, the fear and anxiety? What's the pain behind what we see?

5. **Life Group activity:**
 - + Grab a local newspaper or online local publication or even your postcode's Facebook community.
 - + Write down any place where you see a problem (there will be plenty).
 - + Write down what you perceive to be their pain.
 - + Then ask yourselves a few questions.
 - (a) Of these needs, which ones could I/we actually meet?
 - (b) What are the common themes?
 - (c) Which ones am I/we particularly passionate about?