

LIFE Group Leader Handout

January 26, 2020

Hope Sustained--Rules of Engagement

Pastor Mike O'Connor

Scripture--I Peter 2:11-12

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. 12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Main Idea--There are Conflicts Both Within and Outside of Us--Press to Victory!

Introduction and Review--What is the basis of our hope? (I Peter 1:1 to 2:10)

Rules of Engagement--

- War Within--*abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.* These include not only sexual sins, but religious ones (idolatry and sorcery and relational ones--jealousy, anger, etc. (See Galatians 5:16-21)
- Conflict in Our World--We may be spoken against, but we need to keep our behavior honorable. Don't be judgemental, hypocritical, or make people into projects

What is at Stake--We are the witness of Christ to a needy world.

Resource: *3 Things Christians Do That Non-Christians Despise* by Carey Nieuwhof

Application--

- If 1 = totally centered on the present world, and 10 = living as a sojourner and exile in the present world, what number between 1 & 10 best describes you at the present time? What factors got you there, are keeping you there?
- How did the explanation of the passions of the flesh help to understand (and avoid) these in a fuller sense?
- In those areas where you have continuing contact with the world--who is getting the glory for the quality of your life?

Listening Leaders

An oxymoron, or an outpouring of love?

By Steve Rowe

I used to think that my lack of listening to people was due to either adult ADD or an extremely overactive leadership gift. I figured that some were gifted at listening, I was not, and therefore I could excuse it away. I really thought that to be a good leader AND a good listener was extremely difficult, if not impossible.

The first step in listening is genuine care, concern and love for the people God has entrusted to us. No other technique or motivation will help you listen more effectively until you ask God to transform your heart to love people as He does. Effective listening is simply one byproduct that occurs. It deals with the very core of our heart. If we don't really love or care about the people God has entrusted to us, there's not enough discipline to help us become better listeners.

Ask God daily to change your heart to have His heart of love for others. In line with that is the simple request for God to remove our selfish tendencies to put ourselves first. It's remarkable how simple and Biblical it all comes down to, but how difficult our flesh fights it! Yikes!

Listening seeks understanding. That understanding allows us to truly celebrate a victory, mourn a loss, process or dialogue a question, digest a concern, and validate a hurt. When someone shares a deep need, listening for understanding provides the starting place where we can discern what questions to ask, or how to pray for them. This understanding communicates value and affirmation—stuff we all need.

Model listening to your group. Most people don't naturally know how to do this, and you can see it within their marriages, their relationships at work, their children, or even within the group. By modeling listening, and pointing to its effectiveness, you begin to challenge the people in your group to practice it within every scope of their relationships. Be honest in the modeling, and talk about the difficulties at times—it will help break down the "you've got it all together" myth!

There are so many other skills that can be added here—once the heart issue has been tackled. Listening is a lifelong discipline because our hearts are "leaky" and we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit regularly to make sure we're loving people the way He wants us to. May the "listening leader" not be an oxymoron in our churches and small groups; may it be the natural outgrowth of our heart of love for the people we serve. Can you hear me now?