

LIFE Group Leader Handout

March 15, 2020

Going on Offense

Pastor Michael O'Connor

Scripture--1 Peter 3:8-17

8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 9 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. 10 For

*"Whoever desires to love life
and see good days,*

*let him keep his tongue from evil
and his lips from speaking deceit;*

*11 let him turn away from evil and do good;
let him seek peace and pursue it.*

*12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
and his ears are open to their prayer.*

But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

13 Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, 16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

Main Idea--God's Offensive Weapons for Living in a Fallen World

Some cosmos realities--

- There is evil in your world
- You may suffer for righteousness sake
- You will be slandered
- It is sometimes God's will for us to suffer for doing good

Playing Offense--

- Love one another
- Love your enemies
- Love life
- Love your Lord

Blessing-- blessing as described in Scripture always included five elements:

1. Meaningful and appropriate touch
2. A spoken message
3. Attaching high value to the one being blessed
4. Picturing a special future for him or her
5. An active commitment to fulfill the blessing

Application--

- I am sure that all of you have been living in love. Nevertheless, God's word will bring added focus to that. Which of the Four "Loves" in this passage filled in an area where your love had grown cold or was incomplete?
- The teaching on blessing--how have you had a chance to use that? How have you seen God use it?

Equipping Teaching follows--

LEAD THE WAY

Three critical listening skills for small-group leaders

By Joel Comiskey

As a small-group leader, you have an amazing opportunity to show your group members what listening well looks like. Whether or not you realize it, your group members look up to you. Use that to your advantage when it comes to listening. Keep three things in mind as you seek to model good listening: concentrated listening, eye contact, and non-verbal communication.

Concentrated Listening

Listening is all about standing back from yourself to fully concentrate on what someone else is saying. The word listen occurs 352 times in the Bible, and the word hear is found 379 times. Sadly, most of us don't listen carefully. Stephen Covey says, "Most people do not listen to understand; they listen in order to answer. While the other is talking, they are preparing their reply." Yet Scripture says, "He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame" (Proverbs 18:13). True listening is tough work.

Part of the reason that hearing others requires careful listening is because we talk much more slowly than we think. Some experts tell us that humans think five times faster than they talk. Thus, when someone is talking, the listener can race around to many other thoughts and ideas, while checking in just long enough to get the basic gist of what the person is saying.

Lately, the Lord has been showing me the importance of concentrated listening. I find my mind preparing what I'm going to say next, rather than really listening. Part of the reason is because I don't like the uncomfortable silence of not knowing what to say next. As I've been attempting to diligently listen, I've tried to listen to the very end and then flow with the uncomfortable silent periods. I've tried to make those silent times work for me, knowing they are the fruit of fully listening.

Eye Contact

Looking people in the eyes while concentrating on what they're saying has been an important revelation for me as I seek to listen to others. For example, when I'm leading my small group and someone asks a question, it's easy to get distracted by the "other voices" in the room—John's yawning, Mary's coughing, the car passing by outside, etc. But looking the speaker in the eyes helps me to lock into whatever he or she is saying.

Making comfortable (consistent, but not staring) eye contact steers the thoughts in your head directly to the person at hand. It helps you give yourself to the needs of the person, rather than trying to deal with all the competing noises.

Granted, there is a fine line between looking someone in the eyes and staring. Staring makes the person feel uncomfortable and is not helpful. Slight glances away can break you free from the staring mode while honing in on every detail of the conversation.

Non-Verbal Communication

Often, the unspoken words are more important than the spoken ones. Yet to hear the unspoken words, you must read between the lines. Experts vary on how much of the total communication package is non-verbal, but estimates range from 60 percent to 90 percent. They all agree on one thing: the vast majority of each communication experience is non-verbal. Reading the body language and voice inflection is essential for effective listening.

Listening is a gift we give to others. It requires sacrifice and self-denial. The good news is that effective listening is a learned behavior. With the proper training, all of us can improve in this area and ultimately become excellent listeners.

To Consider...

- How often do you stop listening so you can figure out how you will respond? Why do you feel you do this?
- Are you easily distracted from listening well? How might you focus on the speaker more?
- How well do you read the non-verbal communication of the speaker? How can you pay more attention to what's not being said?