

## Session 3 – L – Listen

### Big Idea

To bless people for Jesus, we will listen to people's needs and stories more than we talk.

### Icebreaker

Try being completely silent as a group for the next 60 seconds. How many different sounds did you hear? What were they? (see who heard the most) How did it feel to sit in silence that long? (Uncomfortable, awkward, peaceful, relaxing?)



If we look closely into the life of Jesus, we can see the types of missional practices He modeled for us. We learn that He didn't just go around preaching at people or healing them; rather He was always intentional and relational with people. Here's just one example—pay attention to Jesus' interaction and which missional principles He is living out:

When Jesus was coming close to Jericho, a blind man sat begging beside the road. The man heard the crowd walking by and asked what was happening. Some people told him that Jesus from Nazareth was passing by. So the blind man shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!" The people who were going along with Jesus told the man to be quiet. But he shouted even louder, "Son of David, have pity on me!" Jesus stopped and told some people to bring the blind man over to him. When the blind man was getting near, Jesus asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord, I want to see!" he answered. Jesus replied, "Look and you will see! Your eyes are healed because of your faith." Right away the man could see, and he went with Jesus and started thanking God. When the crowds saw what happened, they praised God." (Luke 18:35-43)

1. Why do you think Jesus asked "What do you want me to do for you?"
2. What do you think is the biggest barrier to you truly listening to the people (and communities) in your life?
  - a. I'm too overwhelmed with my own stuff.
  - b. I'm afraid of what they might share.
  - c. I don't know the right questions to ask.
  - d. It's hard for me to care about what's going on with others.
  - e. Other (please explain)
3. Have you ever assumed you knew what someone needed, only to find out later that you were wrong? Share the story.
4. Do you feel like you have people in your life that genuinely listen to you? What specifically do they do that helps you feel like that? (as compared to people you interact with and leave feeling they weren't really listening to you)

Christian writer Mike Yaconelli was quoted as bluntly stating "Christians need to know when to shut up." He tells the story of Joseph Bayly, a guy who lost 3 children to death before the age of 18. When his son was in the hospital as a high schooler, laying there dying, he says all these well-meaning Christians showed up quoting Scripture verses and wanting to pray long prayers over him and his son. And Joseph admits, "I couldn't wait for them to leave." Then one friend just came in and didn't say a thing--just sat there with him in silence. Joseph says "I never wanted that guy to leave." He knew when to shut up.

5. Why do you think most people have such a hard time not talking and just listening sometimes?

6. Why do you think it's so important for us to listen to people's (or our community's) needs before or as we begin serving them?
7. What are some things we could be listening for from the people we are trying to help find their way back to God?

### What's Next:

If you've already identified as a small group or individually what your mission is going to be, determine what next steps you can take to really listen to what the needs are, how you can best meet those needs, and how God's story is relevant.

For example, if your mission is focused on a particular neighborhood or town, you could begin reading the local papers/websites and attending community meetings to learn what the most pressing needs are.

And if your mission is focused on a specific person or family, you can begin asking deeper questions about their lives, as you are spending time together relationally. Be ready to be vulnerable yourself, so it's a two-way street.

### Session 3 – Leader's Guide

1. The point here is getting people to realize that even though it seemed very "obvious" what the blind man most wanted, Jesus didn't just assume and start serving him. Rather, He took the time to ask and really listen to what the guy most needed. You could point out too that the blind man must've been listening (was his hearing elevated due to his blindness?) because he knew that Jesus was someone who could help him, and he knew when Jesus was coming by.
2. This is trying to help people identify what keeps us from being more in tune to the needs around us. Follow this question up with "What can we do about these barriers?"
3. This isn't meant to beat anyone up for mistakes we've made in the past, but rather to learn together that it's just not wise to assume the best way to learn people—that we need this important step of LISTENING!
4. This question is meant to help us learn from people we know are good at listening and being in tune to the needs of others. It always helps to know tangible examples of seeing this lived out, so we can apply it too!
5. Let the group discuss this and see where they land—maybe it's because ultimately we constantly fight the battle to focus on needs beyond our own and move towards an others-centered life.
6. Hopefully it's clear to the group by now—so many dangers in just assuming how to best help people, without ever listening to what they need! Yet that's what Christians/churches/people in general often do. Plus listening shows that we truly value people and see them as more than projects, but that we care about what's going in their lives.
7. Whether it's individual people or entire communities, we can be listening for places where they are hurting, where they need God to show up, where the Gospel is relevant, where they are feeling "un-listened" to, where there are needs that nobody but God can do anything about, etc.

