

# THE LISTENING LORD

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# THE EYES OF THE LORD

- Proverbs 15:3; The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.
- Proverbs 5:21; For a man's ways are before the eyes of the LORD, and he ponders all his paths.
- Psalm 33:18; Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love,
- 2 Chronicles 16:9; For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him...

# THE LISTENING LORD

- Psalm 94:9; He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see?
- Micah 7:7; But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.
- God hears the groaning of the Jews in Egyptian bondage
  - Exodus 2:24; And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.
- He hears the grumbling of the Jews in the wilderness
  - Exodus 16:7–9; and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against the LORD. For what are we, that you grumble against us?”<sup>8</sup> And Moses said, “When the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the LORD has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him—what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD.”<sup>9</sup> Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, ‘Come near before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’”

# GOD HEARS EVERYTHING

- Job 34:28; so that they caused the cry of the poor to come to him, and he heard the cry of the afflicted—
- Psalm 69:33; For the LORD hears the needy and does not despise his own people who are prisoners.
- When Solomon dedicated the temple in Jerusalem -
  - 1 Kings 8:29–30; that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you have said, ‘My name shall be there,’ that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. <sup>30</sup> And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.
- Psalm 40:1; I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

# THE INATTENTIVE LISTENER

- How do you feel when someone isn't really listening to you?
  - When someone speaks to you, but doesn't look at you
  - When someone asks you a question but doesn't wait for you answer
  - When someone forgets what you just said
- Inattentiveness is destructive to relationships
- Inattentiveness makes it clear that people and relationships are not as important as getting things done
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer described this “half-listening” phenomenon: “There is a kind of listening with half an ear that presumes already to know what the other person has to say. It is an impatient, inattentive listening, that despises the brother and is only waiting for a chance to speak and thus get rid of the other person.”

# MARK 5 — JESUS LISTENS IN 3 PARTS

- Three stories of hopelessness
  - 5:1-20 – An uncontrollable demon possessed man
  - 5:21-24, 35-43 – A ruler's 12-year-old daughter is sick and dies
  - 5:25-34 – A woman with a hemorrhage for 12 years
- Three stories of uncleanness
  - Jesus meets a man with an unclean spirit living among unclean tombs surrounded by people employed in unclean occupations (raising pigs), all in unclean Gentile territory
  - Jesus goes to the dead daughter
  - The woman's hemorrhage makes her unclean
- Three stories of a listening Lord
  - Jesus listens to the demon(s), the people from the cities and the healed man
  - Jesus listens to the father and accompanies him to the daughter
  - Jesus listens to the woman with a hemorrhage.

# JESUS THE ATTENTIVE LISTENER

## PART 1 -- MARK 5:1-20

- Mark 5:7–13; And crying out with a loud voice, he said, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.”<sup>8</sup> For he was saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”<sup>9</sup> And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many.”<sup>10</sup> And he **begged** him earnestly not to send them out of the country.<sup>11</sup> Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside,<sup>12</sup> and they **begged** him, saying, “Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.”<sup>13</sup> So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.
- Mark 5:17–20; And they began to **beg** Jesus to depart from their region.<sup>18</sup> As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons **begged** him that he might be with him.<sup>19</sup> And he did not permit him but said to him, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

# JESUS THE ATTENTIVE LISTENER

## PART 2

- Mark 5:21–24
- <sup>21</sup> And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. <sup>22</sup> Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet <sup>23</sup> and implored him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.” <sup>24</sup> And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him.

# MARK 5:25–34

- <sup>25</sup> And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, <sup>26</sup> and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. <sup>27</sup> She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. <sup>28</sup> For she said, “If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.” <sup>29</sup> And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her **disease**. <sup>30</sup> And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my garments?” <sup>31</sup> And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, ‘Who touched me?’ ” <sup>32</sup> And he looked around to see who had done it. <sup>33</sup> But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. <sup>34</sup> And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your **disease**.”

# MARK 5:35–43

- <sup>35</sup> While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" <sup>36</sup> But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." <sup>37</sup> And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. <sup>38</sup> They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. <sup>39</sup> And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." <sup>40</sup> And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. <sup>41</sup> Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." <sup>42</sup> And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. <sup>43</sup> And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

# JAIRUS AND THE WOMAN

- Jairus and the woman have only one thing in common: both are victims of desperate circumstances who have no hope apart from Jesus.
- Otherwise, their stories diverge sharply.
  - Jairus has a name and a position.
  - As ruler of the synagogue, he has enough clout to summon Jesus to his house.
  - The woman has none of these.
  - Her name is not given (or remembered), and she has no position.
  - Her only identification is her shame, a menstrual hemorrhage.
  - She must approach Jesus from behind, whereas Jairus approaches Jesus face to face.
  - She has faith while Jairus must be reassured – Don't be afraid, only believe.

# THE LISTENING LORD

- Jesus did not become an attentive listener by attending a communications skills seminar.
- This transforming practice flowed naturally from him because he didn't routinely move through life with an impatient, hurried heart.
- His attentive listening and undivided focus flowed from who he was inside.
- No matter who you were, you were never lost in the crowd to him.
- For Jesus, listening was a vehicle to love people.
- He listened with love to the father of the demon-possessed boy who asked for help. Instead of immediately healing the boy, Jesus engaged him in conversation, asking him, "How long has [the boy] been like this?" (Mark 9:21).

# THE GIVE AND TAKE OF CONVERSATION

- Jesus engaged in conversation with those who suffered
  - He asked the father of the demon-possessed-boy, “How long has this been happening to him? Jesus was engaging with the father about how terrible the boy’s life had been. (Mark 9:51)
  - To the woman at the well (John 4) he introduced the topic of living water, answered her question and raised the subject of her immoral life.
  - To the blind man (Mark 10:51) he asked, “What do you want me to do for you?”
  - To Nicodemus (John 3) he spoke of being born again in response to a question.
- Warnings to hear before we speak
  - James 1:19; Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;
  - Proverbs 18:13; If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.

# LISTENING IS FREQUENTLY A GREATER *SERVICE* THAN SPEAKING

- How is listening serving?
- Consider that the most basic movements of service are to look (to see what's really going on inside people, to investigate their practical needs), to listen (to empty self of brilliant ideas and hear people express their needs), and to love (to sacrifice and offer what others most need).
- When you feel overwhelmed by a task of service, remember to go back to these basics: look, listen, and love.
- A person was once asked what quality he wanted in the people who were caring for him. His answer: "For someone to look as if they are trying to understand me."

# THREE BRICKS TO BUILD A HOME

- Proverbs 24:3–4; By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; <sup>4</sup> by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.
- Wisdom means “seeing with discernment.”
  - Discernment in marriage allows you to see both yourself and your spouse accurately.
- Understanding means “responding with insight.”
  - Understanding allows us to see problems as God sees them, as good for us or necessary at this time.
- Knowledge is “learning with perception.”
  - Perception carries with it a receptive tone. It says, “I am listening. I am learning. I am open.”

# **FIXING IS NOT ALWAYS POSSIBLE, BUT LISTENING IS**

- A person frequently does not want you to fix the problems in the person's life.
- The person talking far more desires your availability, a sensitive, listening ear, and an empathetic response.
- Philip Yancey writes from his experience:
  - Again and again, suffering people have told me the absolute necessity of people being available to them. It is not our words or our insights that they want most; it is our mere presence. "Who helped you most?" I ask. They usually describe a quiet, unassuming person. Someone who was there whenever needed, who listened more than talked, who hugged and touched, and cried. Who didn't keep glancing at a watch. Someone who was available, who came on the sufferer's terms and not their own.

# SEVEN WAYS TO LISTEN WELL

- Dedicate yourself – intentionally choose to listen
- Take time – generously carve out a sufficient period of time
- Select a location – carefully choose a distraction free place
- Focus attention – patiently stay in the moment
- Be sympathetic – openly accept others' feelings
- Remain empathetic – nonjudgmentally put yourself in the others' shoes
- Visualize support – genuinely smile and nod

# SEVEN SIGNS OF POOR LISTENING

- Judging others too quickly and harshly
- Jumping to premature conclusions
- Responding thoughtlessly
- Basing opinions of others on first impressions
- Failing to set aside one's biases and prejudices
- Seeing reality solely from one's own, limited perspective
- Focusing on self-centered agendas

# LISTENING IS THE BEGINNING OF LOVE

- The first service one owes to other in the community involves listening to them. Just as our love for God begins with listening to God's Word, the beginning of love for other Christians is learning to listen to them. God's love for us is shown by the fact that God not only gives us God's Word but also lends us God's ear.
- — Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*

# LISTEN WITH THE EARS OF GOD

- “There is a kind of listening with half an ear that presumes already to know what the other person has to say. It is an impatient, inattentive listening, that despises the brother and is only waiting for a chance to speak and thus get rid of the other person. This is no fulfillment of our obligation, and it is certain that here too our attitude toward our brother only reflects our relationship to God. It is little wonder that we are no longer capable of the greatest service of listening that God has committed to us, that of hearing our brother's confession, if we refuse to give ear to our brother on lesser subjects. Secular education today is aware that often a person can be helped merely by having someone who will listen to him seriously, and upon this insight it has constructed its own soul therapy, which has attracted great numbers of people, including Christians. But Christians have forgotten that the ministry of listening has been committed to them by Him who is Himself the great listener and whose work they should share. We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God.”
- — Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*