

# COACHING TIPS:

## Tip #3: Listening



### REMEMBER:

- THIS IS TO HELP YOU TO START THINKING THROUGH WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS WITH PEOPLE YOU COME INTO CONTACT WITH.
- TRY TO PRACTICE IT IN YOUR EVERYDAY.
- TALK WITH YOUR FELLOW GC BROTHERS AND SISTERS ABOUT WHAT YOU'VE BEEN STRUGGLING WITH OR SUCCEEDING IN.
- ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER AS YOU DO LIFE TOGETHER.

“IF ONE GIVES AN ANSWER BEFORE HE HEARS, IT IS HIS FOLLY AND SHAME.”  
PROVERBS 18:13

“THE PURPOSE IN A MAN'S HEART IS LIKE DEEP WATER, BUT A MAN OF UNDERSTANDING WILL DRAW IT OUT.”  
PROVERBS 20:5

---

You've noticed another. You've also been praying for them. Now, listen to them.

In the book *Practicing the 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations*, the authors talk about listening. They write, “Listening communicates God's love to people in profoundly real ways and opens up opportunities for connection.”

Listening connects people. But, it happens only with an attitude of humility and grace. Listening seeks to understand the other, rather than forcing your agenda. As a result, listening can communicate love to the other. Through being a good listener, you create a safe place for the other to share and to go deeper. Relationships then form and are deepened.

Historically though, evangelistic training was about giving gospel presentations. And it is good to be able to express our faith. However, even these well-intentioned monologues have left a negative impression on non-believers. But, what would it look like to listen instead? To really understand the other?

Where we start is that we have to assume that we are not good listeners to begin with and have a willingness to learn. Mary Schaller adds that “sometimes people don't really want your answer; they want a friend. This is an opportunity for each of us to grow in self-control.” Look, another Fruit of the Spirit.

### Simple assessment:

Answer using a scale of 10-1, where 10=always and 1=never.

"When others are talking to me..."

- \_\_\_ I find myself finishing their sentences.
- \_\_\_ I give my opinions before hearing them out.
- \_\_\_ I get restless and impatient.
- \_\_\_ I lose track of what is being said.
- \_\_\_ I mentally rehearse what I'm going to say next.
- \_\_\_ I take control of the conversation.
- \_\_\_ I interrupt with frequent comments or questions.
- \_\_\_ I try to diagnose and help them fix their problems.
- \_\_\_ I worry about what I'm going to say next.
- \_\_\_ I answer before gaining real understanding.

Based on your answers, where can you improve?

True listening then is about giving your attention to someone for the purpose of understanding them and loving them. Listening is about giving up your agenda, your answers, your story and focusing on the other. You need to let go of your preconceived opinions and to love and be kind to the other. We need to ask ourselves, "what does this person need?" rather than "how can I fix this person?" Though we may know what they need, listening to them helps them to arrive at the answer rather than them rebelling against whatever it is that you are telling them.

This requires a lot of time and empathy. Sometimes, it will seem like it takes too much time. But, what is it that you are trying to do here? Meet a quota of how many you shared the gospel with or are you trying to love someone? Good listening seeks to not only understand the information that was shared but also seeks to understand the person who is sharing.

## WE'RE NOT GOOD AT LISTENING

Often, when others share with us - especially negative emotions or pain/suffering - our knee-jerk reaction is to move them out of it or to fix them. But, we are to "weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15). We stay with where the other person is and we try to understand them, remembering that God alone can change a person's heart.

### PRACTICE: DEVELOPING HEALTHY SPIRITUAL RHYTHMS

1. Listening is "a sensitive but assertive quest really to understand someone else. It requires you to probe, explore, and reflect back what you've been hearing to ensure that you've truly understood what's been revealed to you." (Pollock)

Listen to someone this week. Here are some phrases to help you to probe/explore/reflect back:

- So, if I'm hearing you right...
- You're saying you feel... Is that right?
- What excites/angers you most is...
- You seem to be saying...

2. Share during Schedule C with your GC about the people you listened to. What were some of the challenges? What did you discover about the other person that you didn't know before? Where can you improve your listening skills?