

LISTENING TO GOD – “Walking Together” on our Spiritual Journey”

This lesson introduces us to a Biblical understanding of listening to each other through a lens of caring, appreciating, and especially sharing together in our spiritual journey. We are so blessed to be on the journey together and it is through our togetherness that we are “One in Christ” as we travel down the spiritual road of life. Being on a journey and walking together carries so many wonderful images and moments of helping each other as we seek God’s direction in our lives.

Participant objectives for this lesson include:

1. Gaining an appreciation for the power and importance of listening to each other as we travel together on our spiritual journey.
2. Realizing that the journey is about both the destination and also helping others along the way.
3. Practicing meditating and listening to spiritual direction for our own lives as we travel together towards our heavenly destination.

Accomplishing God’s will can be found in many Biblical examples of a journey. In the old testament Moses lead his people out of Egyptian slavery to the promise land walking together with many of God’s servants. As we learn about Jesus we see Him teaching the importance of a spiritual journey as He walked with the disciples throughout the many travels they shared together.

Learning and Doing Together – *Learning to listen to each other as we grow in our spiritual walk towards Christ!*

One of our greatest blessings is the “Moment of sharing” within the journey that we experience together. It is the power of being the body together that gives us such strength and “bond-ness” to withstand the arrows of the evil one as we travel down the difficult and sometimes rough roads of life. Our “Journey” can be described as a narrow path, bumpy path or for sure a path that requires focus and the willingness to persevere through life’s many trials. Note: *It is not described as a smooth path!*

When you think of learning and doing together how do you envision Jesus Christ as He learned and walked together with his disciples?

Reading Luke 2:46 below - what images do you have of Jesus Christ as a young person?

*After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, **listening to them and asking them questions.** Luke 2:46*

Possible Discussion Questions: Based on the description of “Listening” in Luke 2:46

How does scripture describe Jesus’ posture as he sat in the temple courts? Do you see Jesus as a listener? Do you see Him as a person seeking to learn? Do you see the people around Him also listening and learning? How do these images help you better understand the importance of listening?

Listening to learn and learning to listen is a skill that starts (or doesn’t start) at a very young age. Think about what your kids can teach you about learning. We know that little children imitate the walk and Journey of their parents and those that teach them.

Luke 2:46 states Jesus was “sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking questions.” Scripture further states, “And all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.” He listened to the adults and responded to them. AND, they listened to him and responded back. It seems the event was respectful and conversational. Jesus was young; he was 12. We are never too young or too old to listen and learn from one another.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 states, “He has set eternity in the human heart.” Scripture doesn’t indicate a “beginning date” for setting eternity in the heart. We were born with eternity in our hearts. All generations are on the same journey just in different places along the way.

Life is so full. Listening to the voices and faith of children may be hard for some because children are so young and their words describing faith may seem immature. However, they have strong emotions about God, who He is and what He can do in their lives. Their faith is strong. As adults, it is vital that we not only hear their words but also truly listen to their souls.

True listening takes time and intentionality. Jesus sat down with the teachers listening and speaking. The teachers gave Jesus the same respect. This was an intergenerational moment. There was mutual respect between them. Adults set the tone for spiritual conversations. As we think about children, we need to:

1. Slow our bodies and minds...sit down so they know we are present with them.
2. Make eye contact so they know we are paying attention.
3. Ask “wondering questions” as children speak of their faith and their understanding of God. Questions like, “I wonder how Jonah felt when he didn’t listen to God?”, “I wonder how Moses felt when God told him to raise his staff and part the Red Sea?” put children in the setting of the story emotionally allowing them to experience the event, to the degree possible.
4. Listen to their responses without interrupting. Be patient. It is HARD to just listen and learn from a child.

5. From questioning, adults learn about children's faith and where they are in their journey with the Lord.
6. Back and forth conversations, each speaking and listening with respect, builds relationships between generations. Children feel safe to ask questions and hear the faith stories from the Bible and from adults. The foundations of their faith becomes stronger because the structures from which their faith is built are from the truths of those in the Bible and from the faith stories and events others share with them from their adult lives. The same conversations give adults the opportunity to relive the beauty and freshness of the "child-like" faith we are commanded to have in Matthew 18:3. ("I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.")

We are taught the importance of teaching children the "way they should go" as stated in Proverbs 22:6 – listed below. As we walk on our Journey together, think about how you and I listen to each other as we travel "The Way to Go!".

6 Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6

Possible Discussion Questions: Based on the learnings from our children as we listen to what they teach us.

1. *Do you listen to those younger than you?*
2. *How do you listen? Do you sit down? Do you put the phone down, turn off the television?*
3. *Do you make eye contact?*
4. *Do you look for ways to appreciate what you have learned from your children as you listen?*
5. *How do you share your appreciation and affirm children where they are in their journey?*
6. *What insights have they shared that you have learned?*

We are taught many ways to interact and share God's Word. As part of our journey we need to be connected with each other in more ways than just walking side-by-side. Actually, we need to appreciate what each of us experiences and also how we can help each other along our journey. As noted below in James 1:19 listening requires an intentional approach to be successful. We definitely should take note of the points shared by James!

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

As part of our listening – it requires a mental response of being quick and slow to listen correctly.

The next several weeks we will share insights, gain understanding for listening effectively and reflecting on what it means to listen to God's Word as we also listen to each other. The Lord has prepared a path for us and he wants us to travel the path to His glory. As it states in Proverbs 3: 5-6 *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight."*

Listening is so important for understanding and appreciation:

- What did you learn from this lesson about your listening skills?
- How can you be a better listener to God's message and also your spiritual sister and brother?
- Consider the blessing of your spiritual family and reflect on how you listen for appreciation?
- From your understanding – What does it mean to truly listen?
- And as we have learned from previous lessons – What does it mean to listen with our heart as we walk the spiritual journey together!

Take 2 to 3 minutes to meditate on the things we have shared concerning listening and also the verse below from 2 Samuel 7:22.

Think of the advice to be quick to listen and also what you have heard concerning God's will as we share our spiritual journey together.

"How great you are, Sovereign Lord! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. 2 Samuel 7:22