



Dear LifeGroup Leader,

We're talking about listening to others today. This is a difficult, nuanced skill that we sometimes take for granted. How is it that we optimally tune-in to others so that they feel fully alive and present? Do we stay silent? Do we reflect what they say? Do we ask questions?

When I first learned the role of a psychotherapist, I remember it being difficult for me to listen intently. My go-to was to ask questions - "What was that like for you?" or "Can you tell me more about that moment?" While well-intentioned, I came to realize how much my asking was a crutch. I anxiously wanted to know more information so I could feel more clear about the situation. I'd see the other person glaze over when my questions became a task for them.

It took time for me to learn how to simply be present. To let their person, their story, their feelings affect my presence. Instead of asking them to answer my questions, I'd pause more, I'd say "I can't imagine what that was like for you", or "I feel that disappointment too when you talk about this". And when I did, I'd see something open up and unfold in them into the conversation.

I wonder what feelings and ideas might unfold more in your LifeGroup this week. As you listen, as you lean in, as you give non-anxious space to tune into each other. Give yourself permission to let a comment sit, to stay in that feeling together. As you do, look for the "righteousness God desires."

-Connor



(in)Formation

Forming our Practices

In our complicated lives, it's hard to find solutions. We often turn to something "new" in hopes that this will give us the clarity to move forward. Yet instead we can get mired in a sea of equal and frustrating paths. The way forward sometimes looks like a well-trod path, one that has common ground with the people who came before us, who asked similar questions and found a way forward. We find such a path in the book of James, who in response to complex questions, distills something simple, practical, and formative. James emphasizes the essential practice of listening, being slow to speak, slow to anger, acting morally and with goodness, humility, obedience to God's word, and speaking words of life. These are foundational to the kind of community and people we belong to.



Getting Started

Catch up together about how your week has been, possibly also revisit last week's meeting.

- ▶ When was the last time you tried something new?



Exploring Scripture

Read the following passage together.

James 1:19-26

- ▶ What words stick out to you?
- ▶ Where do you hear God's heart in this passage?

FOCAL POINT: Answers to our deepest questions are found in practices rather than information.



Reflection

Take time to reflect together about the passage.

- ▶ James wrote these words to a community that struggled with living out the practices of the body of Christ. How do you identify with this community? What teachings or information do you hear often but struggle to put into practice?
- ▶ Which of these practices outlined in the passage is the hardest for you? Why?



Praxis

With the understanding that we gathered here are the body of Christ, let's allow the truth from today's scripture to impact us as a LifeGroup.

- ▶ Let's take seriously James's instruction to practice a different way of being together. While there might be many practices we could observe, let's focus on the one mentioned in this passage: being slow to speak and quick to listen. Often without thinking, we can anxiously fill the space of conversation with our own words, rather than leave room for what is organically happening in the space. Let's take a moment to assess how we're doing with that, and talk about how we could do this differently.
- ▶ Let's take a moment and pause in silence together for one minute. Let's simply listen. Ask yourself, "what do I observe happening in this group right now?" Maybe your mind drifts to wondering about a certain person in the group. Lean in and listen to what God is doing in this time. Let's take that time now.
- ▶ Let's share what came to mind. As we share together, pay attention to your tendency to listen intently to others as they share.



Moving Outward

Challenge each other to live out God's truth this week.

- ▶ Pick one relationship that you'll encounter this week. How might you practice listening to them in a new way? How would that change things for you?

James 1:19-26

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.