



HG246: BLESS
Listen With Care

Luke 18:35-43

Home Group Study Notes

9 October 2022 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group
with you, along with any previous notes and other
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

Who are the “talkers” and who are the “listeners” in
your home group?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs
of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using
Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



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Home Group Sermon

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Introduction

Our new HG series is looking at five different ways to share our faith by using the acronym B.L.E.S.S. The blessing of knowing Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour and the assurance of life everlasting spent with him one day in heaven is not meant to be kept to ourselves, we are to share that good news with others. Jesus said that if we believe in him, “streams of living water will flow from within,” (Jn 7.38). Blessings should flow out from us to others because of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. The beauty of this series is its simplicity and its intention to take us back to basics to concentrate on the ministry and life of Jesus and ask the question, “How did Jesus do it?” The first session in the series looked at prayer, this session aims to show us that we bless others simply by listening to what they are saying to us. The L in the word B.L.E.S.S. stands for listening.

The importance of listening

When we don't listen to each other, especially to those people who are important to us, it can leave us feeling unimportant and ignored and if it happens a lot it can make us feel unloved. David W Augsburg in his book *Caring Enough to Hear and be Heard* says that “being heard is as close to being loved that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable.” We should never underestimate the power of prayer and listening.

In order to be a blessing and help others feel important to us we need to listen to them. To do that we must become intentional about listening so that we understand what is being said to us. It is not just listening to what comes out of someone's mouth, it is about learning to listen to their hearts and to the words unsaid. We need to listen without judgement and assume the best in people, we should never pre-judge what people need, and we should always avoid treating our neighbour as a project. We need to trust others and leave them to journey just like we did and remember that their route may be vastly different to our own, so we pray for them, listen to them, befriend them and then trust God to make opportunities for us to share our faith at the appropriate time. It takes a huge amount of pressure off us, we do our bit and God does the rest. If the Gospel is true and someone is sincerely searching for the truth it will prove itself.

Not really listening

Sadly most of us are not that brilliant at listening. A lot of the time we are too busy waiting to make our contribution and we can be so busy thinking about what we are going to say that we can miss what we are being told in the first place. Proverbs 18.3 says “A fool takes no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinion.” When a friend comes to us needing to talk over a problem often we like to give our opinion and offer suggestions how to make things better, rather than just simply listen to what's being said. We want to fix things because we don't want our friends to suffer as a result of their problems, but the truth is, most people don't want to take advice, they just want someone to listen to them and know that they care. We need to talk less and listen more to the people around us and also to the community we live in.

Jesus as a listener

Good friends are vitally important to our mental health and to the quality of our lives and there is no greater friend than Jesus, no one listened like Jesus. When we think of his ministry we often think about his teaching, the miracles and healings he performed but the gospels, and Jesus himself, tended to downplay them. Often he asked those that had experienced a miracle to keep quiet. Jesus knew that miracles and the excitement they generate don't readily convert to life changing faith. Even miracles like feeding the 5000 that attracted crowds rarely encouraged repentance and long term faith. Talking to people and listening to them was important to him. In the Gospels Jesus asks 307 questions. He himself was asked 183 of which he only answered only 3. A part of his way of loving the people around him was to ask good questions and then listen to the answers. We need to do the same.

We all want to be heard

All through scripture, especially in the Psalms we see people calling out to God asking him to listen to them and to help them with what's going on in their lives and of course Jesus was always talking to his Father who listened to him. There is a great need in all of us to be heard. Jesus knew this, he was motivated by love for every person he encountered and as well as perform miracles and teach truths he showed love in the simplest most practical way - by listening, often asking questions that he knew the answers to but that got to the heart of where people were and what was going on in their lives.

The Blind Beggar

In the story of the blind beggar Jesus was on his way to Jericho, one of the steps on the way to Jerusalem for the festival of Passover. Everywhere was busy, the streets were bustling and noisy. During such time, pilgrims would gather and travel together and it was common for a rabbi to teach as he went. This is what Jesus would be doing and the pilgrim band would crowd in close trying to hear what was being said and generally causing a bit of a commotion. A man sat near the city gate reduced to begging because he was blind. As the crowds went by he heard the noise of the people and wanted to know what was going on. He was told Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. The man gave Jesus his Old Testament Messianic title "Son of David" and shouted out, "Jesus Son of David have mercy on me," he was told to be quiet. Although the beggar could not see and had not met Jesus before, he knew his true identity.

Jesus was simply passing through intent on moving forward, he wasn't looking for anyone to heal but even with everything going on around him he was alert and listening and he heard the man shout out "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." The man wanted to be noticed and heard by Jesus and would not be silenced and shouted all the louder. Jesus stopped and asked that the man be brought to him. Now this man was sitting by the gate begging, he was blind, he needed help to be brought over to where Jesus stood and yet he asks the man this question, "What do you want me to do for you?" To us and to those around it might have appeared obvious. The man was blind, surely he wanted his sight, he didn't want to be sitting by the gate day in day out begging, relying on handouts he wanted to see, to be able to provide for himself and any family. But Jesus asked the question anyway. "What do you want me to do for you?" He didn't assume he knew what people wanted and he doesn't want us to assume either. He asked questions and then he listened to the answers. It was on hearing the answer that Jesus went on to bless the man and his sight was restored.

Listen to the Community

As we listen more to people we will find ourselves listening to the community around us, listening out for what is needed and we see clear examples of where people have listened in Billericay, e.g. the demands on peoples household incomes prompted the start of the Foodbank down at St John's. There was an intentional exercise of going out and speaking to the local community and finding out what was needed, nothing was assumed. It turned that many needed help with feeding their families and the Foodbank now serving up to 100 families each week was established.

A thriving night time economy highlighted the lack of police on our street and the trouble that can arise with lots of bars, a busy nightclub and a concern for the safety of night time revellers and so 8 years ago Street Pastors were formed and out of that school pastors and rail pastors arose. It's listening to the community that makes a difference to all our lives in the place that we live.

Ask Questions

Listening is a skill we can become better at if we prepare for conversations by having some questions we can ask, we don't always have to be the one doing the talking, learn to ask questions then listen to the answers. Ask questions that will help you find out about the person you are talking to, where they are from, where did they grow up and so on. Find out what they like, favourite place, holiday, meal etc. and what they do in their spare time, do they have interests or hobbies. If you want to bless your neighbours, find out about them, listen and pray for them. Give them your full attention when you see them. As an exercise take a bit of time to sit and think about the people around you, neighbours, people you work with, people that you share interests or hobbies with. What do you actually know about them and how can you improve relationships by finding out a bit more about them?

Bless through the mundane

We tend think of evangelists as outgoing confident extroverts and we perhaps think that spiritual breakthrough will come about by stirring charismatic worship and heartfelt preaching but God uses anyone who is open and willing to work with him, fishermen, children, women and tax collectors. He often intrudes in the mundane rhythm of life during simple acts of hospitality over cups of tea, or whilst stopping to talk with a neighbour when out in the garden, conversations with and listening to others and then sometimes without us even knowing there may be a few moments of profound encounter with the Holy Spirit as our intentional listening and working with him has made way for him to work. Living a life of blessing others like Jesus did is rarely a journey of the spectacular, it is best lived in the regular ordinary moments of life when we simply reach out and listen.

Keep in mind the blessing that we want to be to others will challenge any judgemental mindset that may influence how we look at those we live with and among. We need to remember that God showed us favour when we did not deserve it. He poured out his mercy on us and loved us even though we have been disobedient, apathetic and rebellious. We will always want people to turn away from their rebellion against God and accept Christ but we should also want to be part of the revelation from the Father that his primary desire is to bless those he created in his image. We can't persuade people by our words, they need an encounter with the Holy Spirit, and when they do, any words that we have shared will come alive as a result.

Its all about Jesus

So this all pretty easy so far, just pray and listen but it is only our love for Jesus and a desire for more of him in our lives, along with an openness to the Holy Spirit working in us, that will motivate us to share him with others. We need to see evidence of him working in our own lives in order to share with others and to convince them that we know him to be real. There is nothing more exciting than seeing the Lord do something in our own lives, sometimes our faith is not enough, we need experience and faith in order to want to share, and to be moved to bless others. It is the experiences of the Lord at work in our lives that will encourage us to share about the love of God and the difference he has made in our lives.

What do you want Jesus to do for you?

In this session we have looked at the passage in the context of listening to others in the hope that one day we may have the opportunity to share our faith but Jesus is speaking to each one of us through this meeting with the blind beggar. This world is full of billions of people each with their own concerns, fears, troubles and on a bad day perhaps when we are weighed down with our own anxieties it can be difficult to believe that God is listening to us, and that he hears our quiet prayer among the billions of others. How many times have you heard people say, my worry is not so important, I don't like to pray for things for myself, other people's need are greater, or words to that effect. Not so!

This encounter took place in a busy bustling noisy town. Jesus would be speaking at a level to be heard by the many around him who were leaning in to listen. This man was reduced to begging because of his blindness. Who would notice him as he sits out of eye line? Well despite the noise around him, Jesus heard, and despite the man sitting on the ground low down, Jesus noticed and through this passage he is saying to you “I see you, I notice you and I hear you.” He called the man over just as he calls you and asks you to draw near. He asked the man, “What do you want me to do for you?” He offered the man a blank cheque as he does to you today and every day. He says to you, “What is it that you want me to do for you?” Whatever is concerning you is a concern to Jesus and he is waiting and ready to listen to you.

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**BUT THE PLANS OF THE LORD
STAND FIRM FOREVER, THE
PURPOSES OF HIS HEART**

Through all generations.

PSALM 33:11

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Looking Upwards (40 mins)

Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: Why do we have such a difficult time truly listening to the people around us?

2: Have you ever felt unheard? What was it like for you?

3: What impresses you most about Jesus's interaction with the man who was blind? How would you have felt if you were that man?

4: When was the last time you truly felt listened to, known and loved. What was so special about that experience?

5: Read Acts 17:21-23. How do you think the people of Athens felt when Paul spoke to them?

6: What do you want Jesus to do for you? Discuss if you feel able and/or spend time in prayer asking Jesus.



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Inwards (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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