

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” - Matthew 12:34

How Do I Listen for the Heart as a Gospel Shepherd?

Things to Remember

- + We need to begin by asking the Spirit to give us ears to hear and a willingness to speak the truth in love.
- + When meeting for the purpose of intentional shepherding, ask the person to come prepared to share their story.
- + In an intentional shepherding setting; consider taking notes while listening.
- + Whether hearing the story of a person’s life or the story of a person’s day, always listen for the heart.

Some Things to Listen for in a Person’s Story

- + Emotional words. (“I’m angry.” “I’m afraid.” “I was really hurt.”)
- + Interpretive words. (“This shouldn’t happen.” “I guess I’m getting what I deserve.” “I wonder if it’s even worth getting up in the morning.”)
- + Self talk. (“I am such a failure.” “I am not smart enough, pretty enough, etc.” “I have accomplished this and this and this.” “I always got good grades and performed well in various activities.” Listen closely for pride and insecurity.)
- + God talk. (“I tried hard to obey God.” “How could God let this happen to me?” “God’s never done anything for me.” “God is punishing me.” Listen closely for denial, blame, and an unwillingness to take responsibility.)

- + Stated motives. (“I wanted to get even. I wanted revenge.” “I was so ashamed, I decided to never tell my parents.” “I need people to like me. I need their approval.” “I feel so guilty, I could never forgive myself ”.)
- + Patterns of behavior, positive or negative. Listen closely for power and control.
- + Destructive or repeated sin. (“I started using drugs when I was 12.” “I smoked pot every day for 5 or 6 years.” “I slept with more women than I can count.” Listen closely for sources of comfort and self-medicating.)
- + Abuse or neglect. (“My dad would scream at me if I came home with C’s.” “I was raped by my step-brother when I was 12.” “I used to play alone in my room most of the time.” “The kids at school used to call me fat.” Listen closely for a victim mentality.)
- + Dad and Mom. (“I’ve never met my dad.” “My mom gave me everything I wanted.” “My dad said he wished I was never born.” “I don’t remember my dad hugging me.” “Nothing was ever good enough for my mom.”)

Whether in a MC / DNA setting or in an intentional shepherding situation, always provide encouragement to a person who has just shared their story. In a MC / DNA setting, consider asking a few initial follow up questions right away.

Encouragement After Their Story

- + Thank you for sharing your story. It is an honor to hear it!
- + Your story is an amazing story about God and his work (most people will not see this, but you should say it anyway). God is in this!
- + It is very easy to focus on your circumstances at a time like this. I completely understand. But God is primarily concerned with your heart in this situation. He wants to keep pulling your focus up out of the mire of your circumstances on onto him. Keep watching for your heart responses in the midst of this trial.

Specific Questions for Further Clarity (If Needed)

- + Tell me about your relationship with your dad.
- + How did you feel when that significant event happened?
- + Did that hurtful situation ever get resolved? • How old were you when that happened?

General Questions

- + Where are you still struggling to believe the gospel?
- + How has this situation helped you see your sin more clearly?
- + Where do you see God at work in this situation?