



This is your chance to listen carefully. Your whole life might depend on what you hear.” Joyce Sutphen

WEEK 1: October 3RD - October 9TH

Question: *How can you listen deeper?*

This week we invite you to listen deeper. The task is to read a text multiple times listening to it differently each time with a different reflective intention. This week we want to have a greater intentionality with text, letting it “speak” to us. Allow our inner voice to speak to us through the text.

Here are the suggested instructions:

1. *Start by picking a text. Poems are usually best, so pick a favorite poem you want to revisit. You can also choose from **THIS LIST OF POETRY (see link below)**.*
2. *Center yourself. Sit quietly for a couple of minutes. Or do some deep breathing.*
3. *For the **first reading**, read it aloud and simply **focus on the feelings** it evokes. During and after reading, ask yourself: What is the dominant feeling I am experiencing? Which part of the poem evoked the strongest emotional response? What happened in your body as you read the text?*
4. *For the **second reading**, focus on which phrase or line **“pops out” at you or “shimmers”** as you read it. Then reflect afterward on that phrase or line, asking: Why is this line hooking me? What is my inner voice trying to say to me through it? How is my inner wisdom trying to get me to look at or wrestle with something*

5. For the **third reading**, focus on what memories arise. Before, during and after you read, hold in your mind questions such as “What memories are being stirred?” or “What memory does this poem want to reconnect me with?” Afterward, reflect on the question of, “What does this memory want me to do with it?” or “What does this memory of the past want to say to me about my present?”
6. For the **fourth and final reading**, ask yourself, “How is my inner voice and deepest self trying to offer me a message of comfort or challenge through this poem?”
7. If you are up for another reading or want to swap one of the above out, consider using this question to guide you: “Who am I in the text? Which character, object or action represents me and where I’m at right now?”

“My child, if you take my words to heart, and listen for my commandments; if you tune your ear to wisdom and your heart to understanding.”

Proverbs 2:1-11

Resources

https://uucf.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/sm_2024-10_sg_deep_listening.pdf

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QSy_-evEDVruFCIfSLMKwYXdj0u4NcZx2Ppo8TrmSk/edit

"I remind myself every morning: Nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I'm going to learn, I must do it by listening." **Larry King**

WEEK 2 October 10TH - October 16TH

Question: *What metaphor speaks to you?*

Listening to your inner voice is obviously about trying to hear a message. But the often less obvious part is deciding what metaphor to use to describe that inner voice. Or to put it another way, how we envision our inner voice significantly shapes what we hear.

For instance, if we think of our inner voice as "our soul speaking," we will listen quite differently than if we think of it as "our heart speaking." Likewise, we will surely hear something different from "the still, small voice within," than from "the ache buried deep inside me" or "my creative muse."

So, to honor this part of the practice of deep listening, spend some time this month reflecting on the metaphors you've used to understand and relate to your inner voice. Here are the three ways we suggest you go about it. As you reflect, consider writing down the names/metaphors.

- *Explore your current name for it: What metaphor is dominant for you now? Why and how did that come to be? Do you notice anything new as you retrace the story of how this came to be "your metaphor"? Do you notice a gift this metaphor gave you that you didn't notice before?*
- *Explore your past names: Trace all the metaphors you've used over your entire lifetime. Start with your childhood; maybe "God" is what spoke to you then. Move into your youth, when maybe it morphed into "my conscience." Then later maybe it became "the devil on my shoulder." And now maybe it has become "that still small voice within." After you are done, step back and reflect on the narrative arc of all these metaphors. What do the twists and turns of their disappearance and emergence say about you and the story of your life? How did each of them serve you well at the time? What about them didn't serve you well? What did they help you hear? What did they not allow you to hear?*

- *Explore other and possibly new names: Write down as many names/metaphors as you can think of. This is all about the metaphors that you've heard others use, i.e., you may never have used "the angel and devil on my shoulders" or "Jiminy Cricket" or "the Holy Spirit," but you know others have. After you are done listing as many as you can, sit back and soak the list in. Meditate on them until a couple stand out. Ask yourself why they speak to you. Then add your own imagined metaphors, ones nobody has ever used, but ones you are now inspired to "try on." Ones that you think will help you hear what you need to hear; ones that might make you into the listener you need to be in your life right now. Let your creativity loose as you come up with the names. For instance, "my mama bear within," "the wild horse inside that wants loose," "my untamed self," "The child that went inward to stay safe," "the rebel I keep hidden inside," "The river within."*

"Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God"

John 8:47

Resources

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WEEK 3 October 17TH - October 23RD

Question: *What does it mean to listen to a labyrinth?*

One of the most ancient deep listening tools is the labyrinth, a maze-like structure on the ground used for introspective walking meditations. For this exercise, spend some time this month learning about them, finding one(or creating one) and walking it.

To help you on your way, you can get background on the spiritual practice of labyrinths [here\[A\]](#) and [here\[B\]](#), as well as some how-to guidance [here\[C\]](#) and [here\[D\]](#). Labyrinths are quite popular so it should be easy to find one at a park, university or church near you. If you can’t find one, you can try this wonderfully creative at-home stone version[E] or try a finger labyrinth[F] using a simple printable finger labyrinth found [here\[G\]](#). If you are feeling adventurous, you could also make one in your backyard using spray paint[I] or mulch[J] or leaves[K], build one in the sand[L] if you are near a beach[M], or create one in your home out of candles[N].

When it’s time for you to walk the labyrinth, we suggest that you bring to mind a question, worry or problem as you enter the labyrinth and reflect on it as you wind your way to the middle. When you arrive at the center, remain there for a while and listen for an insight or answer to the question you brought with you. Once you feel that you’ve listened enough, walk back focusing on how you might integrate the experience or the message from the center into your living and loving.

“To answer before listening— that is folly and shame”.

Proverbs 18:13

Resources

https://uucf.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/sm_2024-10_sg_deep_listening.pdf

- [A] <https://earthandaltarmag.com/posts/qs6pevk77i0lhpqlvv8w0u23f1sbwk>
- [B] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nbss93lLx2A>
- [C] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xrjc3zXyTAs>
- [D] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkOD4KaJIGw>
- [E] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IASj3ZoNw58>
- [F] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQYNfqgtBbA>
- [G] <https://heatherplett.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/labyrinth-for-printing-for-11x11-.pdf>
- [I] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMHQGwDIGVI>
- [J] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-oNuEX_3oo
- [K] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bS622CVQDNs>
- [L] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nQhLiV61bQ>
- [M] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IT7LlvnUBy8>
- [N] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HmzbxzVFGHA>

“One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say.”
Bryant H. McGill

WEEK 4 October 24TH - October 30TH

Question: Can you practice the art of listening?

We practice to become good musicians. We practice to become good athletes. We practice to become good artists. But somehow we’ve been led to believe that we don’t have to practice to become good listeners. So let’s spend this week focusing on and practicing just one listening skill. After all, it’s not really practicing if you only do it a few times. So keep your chosen listening skill/tactic in your back pocket and look for opportunities to use it. And if you are looking for motivation to stick with it, just remind yourself of the words of pastor and minister David Augsburger, “Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable.” Knowing that we are getting better at loving, not just listening, will surely make practicing worth every minute.

Oh, “What listening skill might I choose?” you ask. Well, we’ve found a few that seem manageable, impactful and most needed. Each can be found in either example videos or blogs.

1. Stop Interrupting by taking a breath

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUeKH29Plfw>

and/or looking them in the eye (found in #4)

<https://www.bustle.com/p/how-to-stop-interrupting-people-be-a-better-listener-in-3-days-18760543>

or using the 80-20 rule (found in #10)

<https://www.bustle.com/p/how-to-stop-interrupting-people-be-a-better-listener-in-3-days-18760543>

2. “Go on.” & “Tell me more.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpnNsSyDw-g&t=47s> (found minute 1:20-2:05)

(i.e. “Empty the bucket”)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpnNsSyDw-g&t=47s>

3. “Will you tell me your story?” and “I’d love to know how you came to this point of view.”

<https://urbanconfessional.org/blog/howtodisagree>

“Bow down thine ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge”

Proverbs 22:17

Resources

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