



# Listening Well:

Sharing Grace & Love  
through  
Empathetic Listening

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“Listen to all the conversations  
of our world, between nations  
as well as between individuals.  
They are, for the most part,  
dialogues of the deaf.”

- Paul Tournier, Swiss Christian Psychologist, 1980s



“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply... reading their autobiography into other people’s lives.”

- Stephen Covey

First:

We must listen to people.

Directly.

Without “lenses”.

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Second:

We must love people.

Unconditionally.

With God's love.

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**“Being listened to is so close to  
being loved that for the average  
person, they are almost  
indistinguishable.”**

David Augsburg, medieval German mystic & Franciscan friar

Listening can be hard.

How would you respond?

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"You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman.  
How can you ask me for a drink?"



# Barriers to Good Listening



Preaching:

*“Scripture says....”*



Admonishing:

*“You ought to be thankful I have come to you. Is this how you treat someone politely?”*



Threatening:

*“You better stop talking like that. It will make both of us look bad.”*



Defensiveness:

*“Do you know who I am? I can do anything I want to do.”*

# Barriers to Good Listening



Ordering or  
Commanding:

*"You must not worry  
about that. Just do  
as I say."*



Demanding:

*"Come on, woman!  
I'm thirsty."*



Advising:

*"You need to be  
more confident in  
yourself."*



Instructing:

*"You should think  
about this in other  
ways. You are focused  
on our cultural  
differences, but this is  
about faith."*

# Barriers to Good Listening



## Interpreting:

*"You're just afraid because of what you've heard about people like me."*



## Name Calling:

*"You're so stubborn! Just like a Samaritan."*



## Criticizing:

*"You are hurting yourself when you get so focused on being a Samaritan."*



## Wandering:

*Distracted, "Hmmm, look at that fly. What kind of fly is that? Oh, were you saying something?"*

# Barriers to Good Listening



## Judging:

*"No, you shouldn't be saying that. You are wrong."*



## Fact Digging:

*"Well, what do you mean by a drink? How would you define it?"*



## Sympathizing:

*"You're right, your life is so hard, and you are such an outcast. I'm tearing up just thinking about it."*



## Interrupting:

*"You say" – Well, I know you all thought you knew what I might say here, but actually...*

# Barriers to Good Listening



Probing or  
Questioning:

*“What bothers you  
about my question?”*



Reassuring,  
Sympathizing:

*“Sure, I can ask you for  
a drink. You’re just  
feeling hesitant  
because this isn’t  
typical. You can do it.”*



Diverting  
(Often by Humor):

*“This one time, a donkey  
and a horse...”*

Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians, because Christians are talking when they should be listening. He [or she] who no longer listens to his brother [or sister] will soon no longer be listening to God either . . . . One who cannot listen long and patiently will presently be talking beside the point and never really speaking to others.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, (quoted in H. J. Clinebell's (1984) *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, p. 72)



Barriers to good listening  
are all focused on the listener,  
not on the one being listened to.

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“Make me genuinely accessible.

People come with their words, but they hope I will hear their hearts. Whether they speak or write, teach me how to be truly quiet inside and actively listen.

I do not want to disrespect them by interrupting or pretending to listen while I secretly ignore them so I can think about what I'm going to say.

I want to really listen and understand their hearts. Help me open my mind and heart, not just my office door.”

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From "*Leadership Prayers*" (p. 74) by Richard Kriegbaum , former president of Fresno Pacific University





Jesus focused on the woman, loving and honoring her,  
and spoke to her underlying need.

# empathy

...the ability to recognize, relate, and respond to the individual perspectives, mental states, and feelings of others...



#empathyemployer

The need to react and  
provide help in any way  
you can

***“I understand what you  
feel and want to help”***

Compassionate  
Empathy

The ability to rationally  
understand a person’s  
feelings and thoughts

***“I put myself in your  
shoes”***

Affective  
Empathy

The ability to  
experience the  
feelings of other  
people

***“I feel WITH you”***

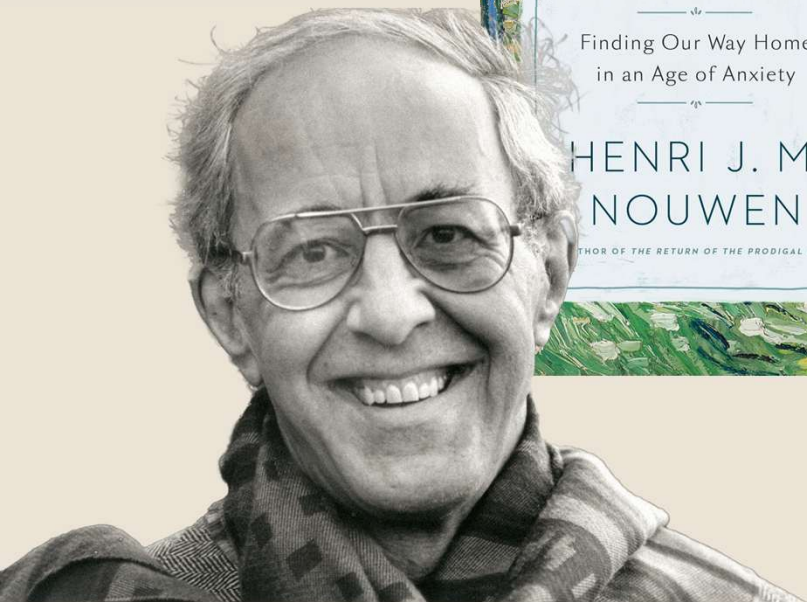
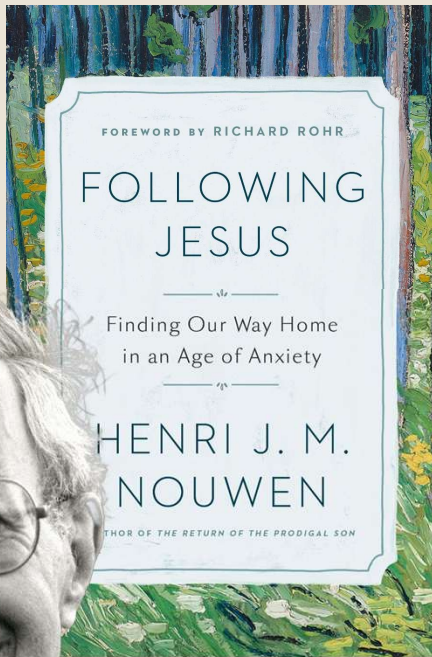
Cognitive  
Empathy

“Empathic listening seeks to get inside the other person’s perspective and see the world the way they do. This skill requires the listener to use their eyes, ears, and heart to listen.”

Stephen Covey

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# Learning to Listen



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**1 - The Invitation: “Come and See”**

*Seeing the Person*

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**2- The Call: “Come and Follow Me”**

*Hearing the Person*

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**3- The Challenge: “Love Your Enemies”**

*Understanding the Person*

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**4- The Cost: “Take Up Your Cross”**

*Discipling the Person*



**To listen is very hard,  
because it asks of us so much interior stability  
that we no longer need to prove ourselves by speeches,  
arguments, statements, or declarations.**

**True listeners no longer have  
an inner need to make their presence known.  
They are free to receive, to welcome, to accept.**

**Henri Nouwen**

**Listening is much more than allowing another to talk while waiting for a chance to respond. Listening is paying full attention to others and welcoming them into our very beings.**

**The beauty of listening is that, those who are listened to start feeling accepted, start taking their words more seriously and discovering their own true selves.**

**Listening is a form of spiritual hospitality by which you invite strangers to become friends, to get to know their inner selves more fully, and even to dare to be silent with you.**

**Henri Nouwen**



# 1 - The Invitation: “Come and See”

*Seeing the  
Person*



1. **Stop** and look – SOLER
2. **Show** her know that you see her.
3. **See** what is being said and what isn't being said.
4. **Stay attuned** to the Holy Spirit and to yourself.



## 2 - The Call: “Come and Follow Me”

### *Hearing the Person*

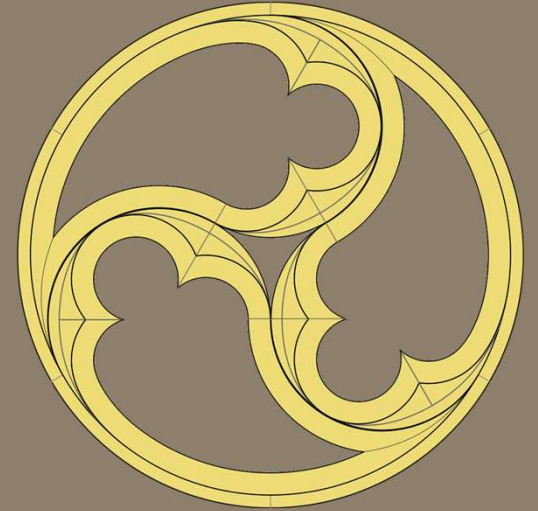
1. **Listen to** what is being said.
2. **Lightly** offer encouragement.
3. **Linger** over her words.
4. **Lay out** what you heard.



Psychologist and developmental researcher Daniel Stern (2004) reports in his studies of infants through adults,

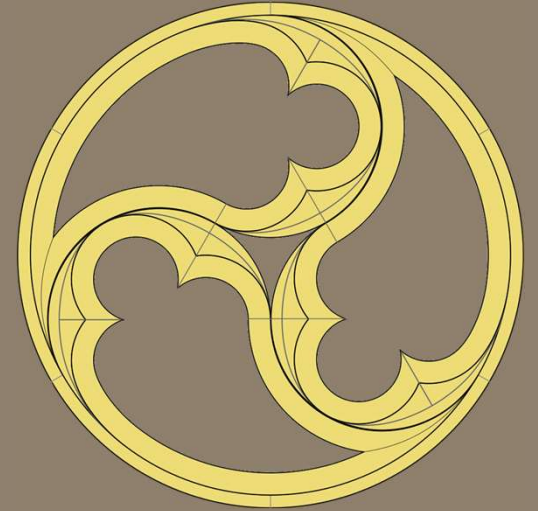
*“Our nervous systems are constructed to be captured by the nervous systems of others, so that we can experience others as if from within their skin, as well as from within our own. A sort of direct feeling route into the other person is potentially open, and we resonate with and participate in their experience, and they in ours”*

(p. 76, The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and in Life).



Lewis, Amini, & Lannon (2000). *A General Theory of Love*.

*“Because human physiology is . . . an open loop arrangement, an individual does not direct all of his [or her] own functions. A second person transmits regulatory information that can alter hormone levels, cardiovascular function, sleep rhythms, immune function, and more – inside the body of the first. The reciprocal process occurs simultaneously: the first person regulates the physiology of the second, even as he [or she] is regulated. Neither is a functioning whole on his own; each has open loops that only somebody else can complete. Together they create a stable, properly balanced pair of organisms.” (p. 85).*



### 3- The Challenge: “Love Your Enemies”

*Under-  
standing  
the Person*



1. Resonate with his story.
2. Reflect feelings.
3. Relate your story to help him see.
4. Reveal possible deeper meaning.

## Stephen Covey (2020)

- Listening at this stage gives the person **psychological air**.
- Rephrasing content and reflecting feelings draws the speaker closer to the listener, reassuring them they are in a safe space.
- The barrier between the two persons is removed for **soul-to-soul flow**, which includes trust and vulnerability.

Adapted from Christina Wilson, 2021





## Michael Sorensen (2017)

“The truly good listeners of the world do more than just listen. They listen, seek to understand, and then validate. That third point is the secret sauce—the magic ingredient” (p. 18).

Adapted from Christina Wilson, 2021



## 4- The Cost: “Take Up Your Cross”

### *Discipling the Person*

1. **Present** inconsistencies & contradictions.
2. **Point out** relational issues.
3. **Promote** growth in faith and life.
4. **Plan** for wanted changes.



# Learning to Listen

1- The Invitation: “Come and See”

*Seeing the Person*

2- The Call: “Come and Follow Me”

*Hearing the Person*

3- The Challenge: “Love Your Enemies”

*Understanding the Person*

4- The Cost: “Take Up Your Cross”

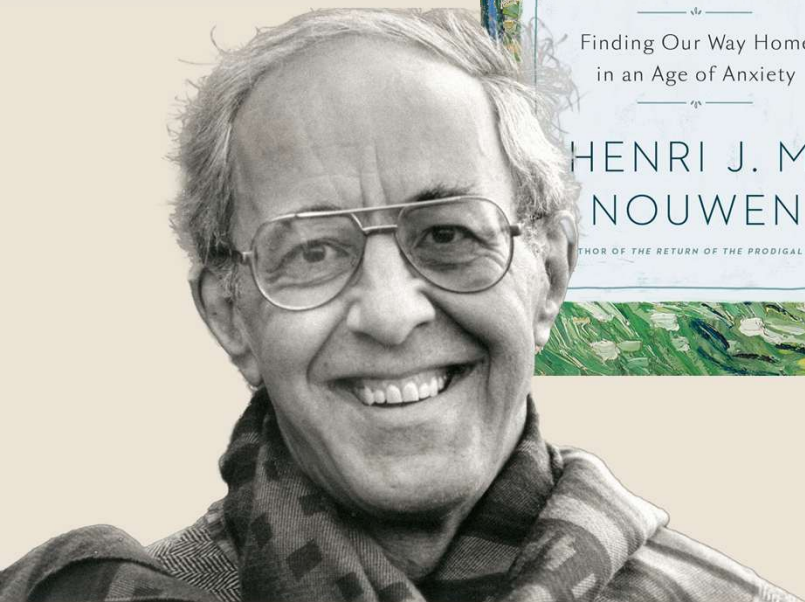
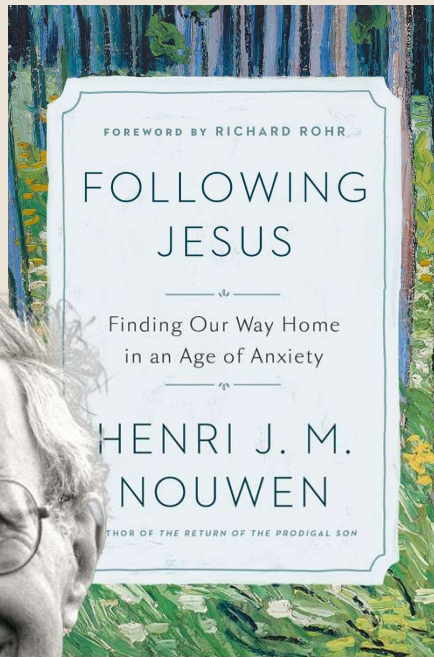
*Discipling the Person*

5 - The Reward: “My Joy Will Be Yours”

*Healing in the Person*

6–The Promise: “I Will Be With You Always”

*Faith Growing in the Person*





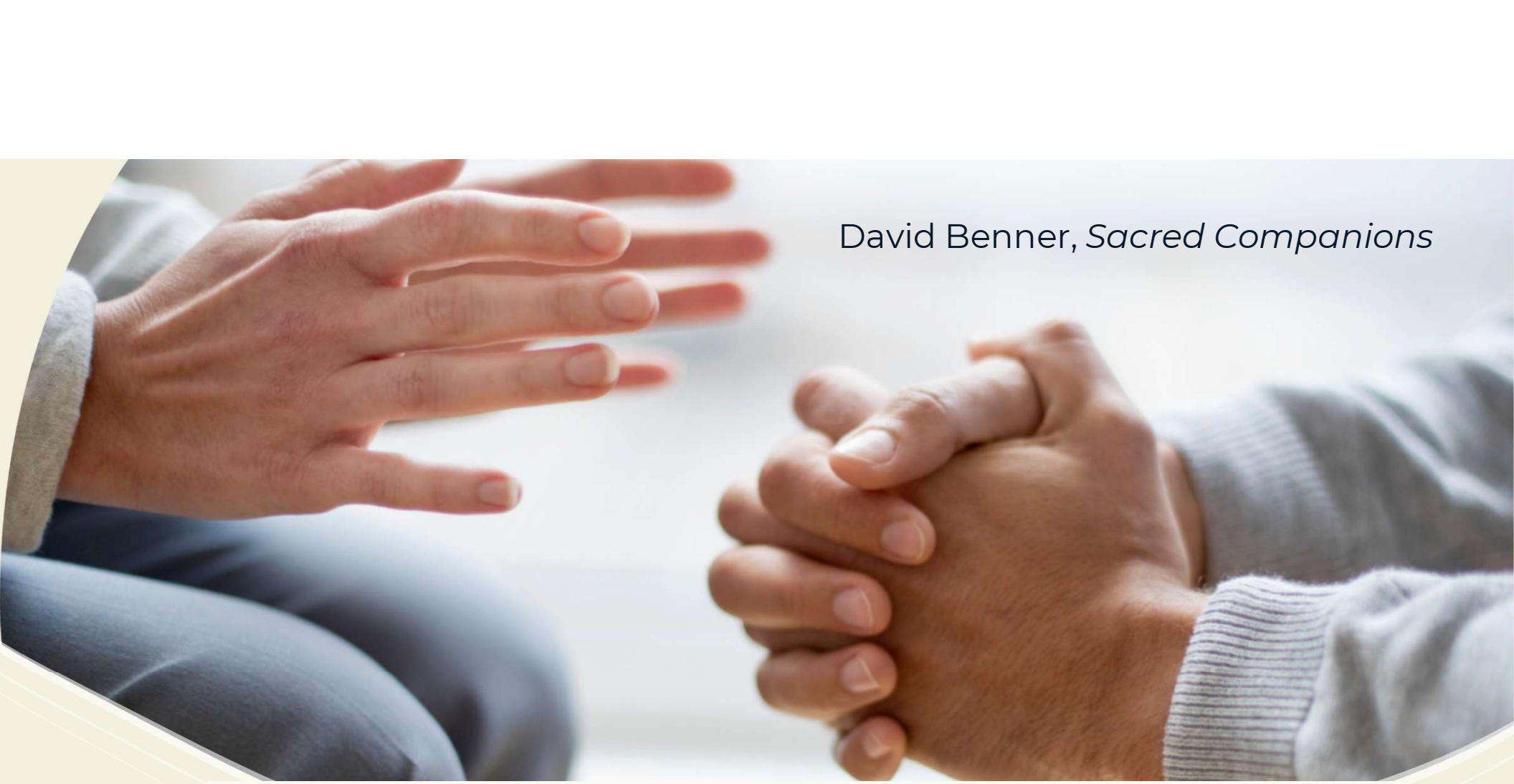
Listening has  
helped me to...

- Become a vessel through which others can experience the Living Water...
  - As I love and honor them, allowing them to be the first to tell me who they are,
  - As I come to see them a bit more as God sees them.



## Listening has helped me to...

- Become a better vessel as I've been shaped by the stories of others...
  - To admit my own sin and brokenness
  - To value the spiritual disciplines
  - To confess and consecrate my identity markers other than Christ
  - To grow in my ability to sit in tension
  - To cultivate intimate spiritual friendships
  - To have compassion for myself on this long journey of growing in holiness



David Benner, *Sacred Companions*

“Soul hosts prepare for their gift of hospitality by cultivating a place of quiet within themselves. This is the place where they will receive others. If I have no such place within myself, I am unable to offer myself in a gift of hospitality. But when I have begun to be a person with a quiet still center, I can invite others to come and rest there.”



# Let's Talk!

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