

Relationships - Learning to Listen

By John Van Sloten

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Past Thursday I got an email from a 29 yr old friend... last time we spoke about a month ago... he just had emergency surgery for cancer... **[(1) READ NOTE]**

Hi John,

Thanks. I really appreciate your call a few weeks ago. I was a mess. I didn't realize it at the time, but I didn't know what to do with myself. I guess it all hadn't really hit me yet at the time. The fact that you called and gave of your time for me and Kim is very special to me. I cannot thank you enough.

Things are looking up! I'm back at work, and starting to get back 'into it' too. I'll probably just be back up to speed by the time I have to take more time off for treatment. I hope I'll be able to give it my all when I get back. The world is different than it was a few months ago. Certain things don't seem as important, and other things seem infinitely important. I'm going to have to find a new balance between family and work, and I think my family is going to love it! I hope work will be able to accept it.... :)

Finding out you have cancer is something I wish no one would have to endure, and I certainly wouldn't recommend it. But it sure is a shortcut to an immediate life re-evaluation. All of a sudden

everything that used to be so important drifts to the sidelines, and the truly important things become very clear. God works his plan in strange ways sometimes.

Thanks John, take care

Whenever I deal w/people in middle of crisis I often hear same truth... **"All that I thought was important is not so important... all that I was skipping over/ skimping on is most important!" PAUSE...** that "most NB" thing is always about **relationships**...about family... friendships... investing time there! **PAUSE...**

PAUSE [(2)thinking back on that call... remember how **busy I was** (feeling time pinch)... **emotionally full** I felt... part of me wanted to duck... procrastinate... figure someone else handle it... **PAUSE... Couldn't!**

Then I get this note... **PAUSE...** Wanna know what I did made such a difference for this guy?... **I listened!** **PAUSE...** Sure, I said a few words... and I know I did pray... but most of the call I just **"let him talk"**...

(SLOW) "LET HIM TALK..." what a strange way to phrase it!... As though my **attentiveness is what gave him permission** to speak... my **listening presence allowed him a voice... LONG PAUSE...**

Don't you long for that? **'a listening presence?'**... **'permission granting attentiveness?'** **PAUSE...** I do... remember fondly times I experienced it... **[(3) Counselor... PAUL V... FRAN]** ... showed me how much **I need to be heard... value the loving attention of another...** how important that listening is **know myself... find the truth... get my bearings...**

I can't find my way without it... (SURE... self talk/listen not the same!)... **Another's attention is crucially NB!!...** PAUSE... Desperately needed nowadays!!!... **"We live in a time of huge listening deficit!"**
Relational economy is tanking!... Due in large part noise level (bombarded w/ (**SLOW**) **voices ... images messages... ads... fast pace... traffic... volume...**)
no space left to take more in!...

Leaves us in a conundrum... **(4)"We live in a world filled with people who desperately need to be heard; and who have no time to listen."** How get out of that?

LONG PAUSE... then I do a **(5)Bible word search...**
"God & heard... listen... hear"... **[READ LIST especially Daniel passage! (6-12)]**

Every prayer penned in this book... **heard by God...**
every prayer you've prayed! O was fully present for!
(knew it or not!... Answered way you thought or not!)
One answer you did get **full & loving attention of O!**

(13)God is listening!..[15 sec PAUSE slides (14-18) hearing tearing knowing feeling understanding] (whispering)... perfectly... **completely knowing you** (more than you do)... and **Holy attentive** (w/ an H... w/love that is so for you... can't imagine!)

It's hard to imagine scope of **Divine Attentiveness...**
all the time... everywhere... perfectly... **PAUSE...**
Sometimes we know it mystical moments of **prayer/psalm reading – JVS** **"(19) Is there any god like God? Are we not at bedrock? Is not this the God who armed me, then aimed me in the right direction?" Psalm 18:31**

O says, **"I'm here... & I hear!"** **PAUSE...** Sometimes directly other times God listens **through other people**

via "Godsends!"... Angels... **LONG PAUSE...** (SLOW) and sometimes **you're that Godsend!... PAUSE...**

God made you in his image/like him... calls us to do his work on earth... if big part of O is listening then WE... **Talking community** past year at NHC... how build it? Increasingly **learning can't program it** (enough socials, groups, etc)... Place community starts is here (Heart) If we want community to grow... **a real Godly community ...** then we need to start **acting more like him...** exemplifying his character... personally living it out... **[LEADERS]... [JVS]...**

(20) One huge way we can do that listening more!
by engaging in a new/alive way w/God's listening to us then (with new emotional space) listening to others! **PAUSE...** may seem like a sacrifice (it is!)... require a selflessness (it will!)... but if we all do it at same time... as much as we give for others give back for us!

But we have to be willing to look beyond our selves!
take on this radical 'others before myself worldview'...
God's worldview!... How do you do that? **PAUSE...**
Well, I've got five easy steps!!! **PAUSE...**

I don't know!!... better eye contact?... verbal cues?... they don't mean squat if they don't come naturally!... **what we need is to love other people...** to really care... if you care, then you look into someone's eyes... if you really are empathizing then you naturally nod in agreement... if you're there, then you're there!

(21) The hard part is being there!... getting there!...
loving that person the way God does... to the point that you'd **give up your life for them... carry a burden for them** come right along side them (aurally incarnate into their lives) spend time with them... walk w/them!

PAUSE... I think the only way that happens via having **experienced it for yourself...** until you've been listened to no idea what that kind of gift means!... until know **(22)Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard...**

PAUSE... This is the kind of thing God has you here for!... Know him as listener... and to listen. **PAUSE...** **“We need to listen to him... to know how much he listens... so that we can listen to others...”**

PAUSE... **(23)You hearing this?...** **LONG PAUSE** This is what O is asking of us/you... **PAUSE...** see in others what he sees... **[VALUE]... [NEED]... [LOVE] [GRATITUDE – in you/you're heard/for them(O's work) [THEN to consider O might be speaking there!!]**

PAUSE... And I want to fold my arms defensively... **I don't know if I can trust you God...** that I'm not going to fry myself... been burned before!

Or we yawn... start thinking about our grocery list... looking over God's shoulder as he talks... get back to what's really NB to us... **“I'm not sure I'm even interesting in listening more to others God!”**

Or we feel ill equipped **“I don't have it in me to be that kind of person... just not good at paying attention.”...** Or, get real honest, **“I don't even notice the need to listen or care that much... more worried about myself!”** “ true for me way too often...

Say any of those things... or whatever is really on your heart right now... **5 SECOND PAUSE....** and know that God (like some perfect counselor/friend/confidante) is listening right now... **LONG PAUSE...** right beside you... not judging you... wanting to help... full and undivided attention!!... **PAUSE...**

(24) X's coming is God's listening... incarnation is divine empathy... X hears all excuses excuses us/ understands... offers a 'new story' him in us... new life in X... listening life in X.

“God heard the boy crying...”
Genesis 21:17

“God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant...”
Exodus 2:24

“...and God heard them, for their prayer reached heaven, his holy dwelling place”
2 Chronicles 3:27

“I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you.”
2 Kings 20:5

“From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears.”
Psalm 18:7

For you have heard my vows, O God;
Psalm 61:5

“Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.”

An Angel to Daniel 10:5

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