



a division of Flower Girl Greetings, LLC
writings by Beth Ann Phifer



Listening

A Personal Story

March 21, 2024

Years ago, I was asked, “What would you like people to say about you at your funeral?” The answer that came immediately to my mind shocked me. It also gave me a new focus. The answer – I would like just one person at my funeral to say, “She heard me.” In other words, “She listened and valued me.”

I never thought of myself as a good listener. Because of my visual nature, I take in a lot of information in my environment and find myself working hard to focus away from the details of my surroundings to assimilate the words of others. And so, along the way, I gathered listening tips that resonated with me. I even made a bookmark to remind myself of them. Although I still rush in to get a word in edgewise, I find myself calmer and more interested in others than in being heard. But I still have a long way to go! Here is my list on how to be a good listener along with other thoughts and Scripture.

Listening Tips

A good listener is simply someone who cares.

1. **Focus** on what the person is saying, not about what you are going to say or how it will affect you. This is difficult if you have a strong opinion or are hurting. Let sentences finish followed by spaces before responding, so you are sure you have understood. Give time, and stay on topic.
2. **Ask** clarifying questions for more information, and **paraphrase** to be sure you understood.
3. **Use positive gestures**, expressions, and tone of voice.
4. **Do not give advice** or a solution unless asked; Value the person’s need to air their thoughts.
5. **Value** their personality and uniqueness by allowing it to be expressed. Acceptance nurtures conversation and releases healing.
6. **Assume positive intent**; give the benefit of the doubt.
7. **Be free** to kindly disagree.
8. **Be grateful** for any time anyone gives you. None of us deserves anyone else’s time.

An Experiment

A few years ago, six of us friends gathered after not seeing each other in a while. We agreed it would be fun to practice listening. Using a five-minute hourglass, we each took five minutes at a time to share whatever we wanted to share. After the five minutes ended, the other five people would ask questions about what was shared. Then, we moved on to the next person. We all agreed it was a peaceful, fun time of getting caught up and learning about each other. There was also a lot of laughter!

A Favorite Quote

Following is a quote I have always loved by Dinah Maria Mulock Craik from *A Life for a Life*. I never read the book, but heard of the quote (often attributed to others). She lived in the United Kingdom from April 20, 1826 to October 12, 1887:

Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person; having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but to pour them all out, just as they are, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and then, with a breath of kindness, blow the rest away.

These words embody many of the principles in the list above. We communicate well when we know the other person will assume the best, and when we are trusted and valued.

A Father Who Listens

When we listen well, we reflect our Father in heaven Who listens to us. We also strengthen our listening muscles to be able to listen to *Him* better. Furthermore, listening well gives us inner rest and stability.

To read a devotional on listening to the Holy Spirit, see my writing *Early Ear* at ShaleFragments.com. This message was placed on the back of a postcard to be used as a Quiet-Time Reminder and is available at FlowerGirlGreetings.com. Following are the words on the front of the postcard from Isaiah 50:4-5:

Adonai Elohim, The LORD Creator God, has given Me the tongue of disciples that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning. He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.

Listening is an active, holy pursuit!