

05.19.21 – A Weekly Word for Covenant Church

Title: “Listening Is Most Important”

Scripture Reading: [Acts 17:16-34](#) ; [Proverbs 18:1-13](#)

Reflection: Pastor Henry

One of the things that Pastor Doug said in his sermon this past Sunday really stood out to me. I wonder if it stood out to you too. What Pastor Doug said that stood out to me was this:

“Ironically, listening is probably the most important skill in effective evangelism.”

Ironic for sure. Why? Because whenever the topic of evangelism or having to talk about spiritual things with someone else comes up, the number one fear, concern, and worry that people share when it comes to these is whether they are going ‘say the right thing.’ Typically, in our hearts and minds, evangelism and talking go hand in hand. Evangelism, we think, is primarily about what we say or don’t say. And because we are afraid, or at least concerned that we might say the wrong thing, or won’t know what to say at all, or wonder IF we will be able to answer a specific follow up question or comment from the person we are talking with, we opt out of doing it altogether. Since we think talking is the most important skill in evangelism and we have no idea how the conversation might or might not go ahead of time, we simply take a pass rather than potentially mess it up somehow.

But what if listening, rather than talking, is more important when it comes to effective evangelism? Then what?

When I was in seminary, one of my professors helped and encouraged us to make this change when communicating with people by repeating again and again and again the phrase: “Know that you don’t know.” When it comes to interacting with and conversing with people, he warned us against making the mistake of assuming ahead of time that you know what is going on, what the “problem” or their “problem” might be, what they are dealing with, what their joys or sorrows might be, etc. Never think you know. Why? Because we don’t completely know. We can’t. In fact, it is impossible for us to know. Only the person we are talking to knows what is going on with them. So, know that you don’t know. Instead of talking and telling...listen and let them tell you...and then respond accordingly. Instead of being focused on talking, simply listen to what they say. As you listen to them, then you will know, because they will tell you. 😊 In order for this to happen however, we need to be willing to listen first.

When we listen, great things happen. Listening helps us know how to respond. Listening helps us know what to say, when to say it, and how to say it. When we listen well to our spouse or child or sibling or friend or co-worker or neighbor, we are able to respond well. When we listen poorly, we respond poorly. When we listen well, we are more apt to say the “right” things during the conversation than if we are preoccupied and primarily focused on what we want to say.

Tell me, how often does it go well for you when you respond to a person or situation before listening well first? The same is true for evangelism. When we listen well when conversing with someone about spiritual things, Pastor Doug noted for us that we will be able to “...diagnose how spiritually open they are...find the common ground...determine what aspect of the Gospel we may need to focus on.” When we listen to someone’s story, when we listen to the Holy Spirit, and when we listen to the Gospel, we will begin to hear and know how to connect them all together. Listening first. Then some talking. More listening. Then some more talking. Listen. Respond. Listen. Respond.

What might happen to our evangelism if we made listening more important than talking?

What might happen if we worried more about listening to God, to the Holy Spirit, to the other person than we worried about talking and what we might or might not say?

What might happen if we made listening our most important evangelism skill of all?

Prayer:

God, enable us to listen to you, to your Spirit, and to those whom you put in our path each day. AMEN.

Action Item for the Day/Week:

Find 2 or 3 opportunities this week to have conversations with other people where your primary focus is on listening well to the other person rather than on talking and what you are going to say. What, if anything, did you notice when you made listening well your primary focus?

Songs for today:

[Holy Spirit](#)

[Will You Not Listen?](#)

[I'm Listening](#)