

Pa232 Counseling

Lesson Pa232-6 Active Listening

In this lesson you will learn more counseling principles from Jesus, who was sent to be the “wonderful counselor” (Isa 9:6). Mothers and fathers, friends, doctors, and ministers have always been available as counselors for the troubled. When a problem becomes more than a person can handle on his own, he seeks out such people for help. A troubled person often comes to a stranger as a last resort. They may be out of solutions, having used all the suggestions provided by family. The person is at a crisis point. This is often the kind of person the Holy Spirit brings across your path.

People in Bible times, the first century, walked a lot more than most people do today. Luke was a doctor who wrote down the stories of Jesus in a book of the Bible, called by his name. He tells us about the time that two of Jesus’ followers were walking along the road to their home. They lived in a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. In this story you can hear the two men talking to each other of their many concerns about Jesus. As they walked and talked, they shared a lot that they knew about Jesus and what had happened. As they were absorbed in their conversation, Jesus came and began to walk with them. Somehow, Luke says, they were kept from recognizing him.

Jesus asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" When the ‘stranger’ asked this question, they stood still with their faces downcast.

Now, the Holy Spirit is given to believers to help them discern the needs of people around them. Sometimes a person will come to you for help, to tell you their need. Other times God will reveal to you that someone has a need. He will direct you to open a conversation with them. One of the counseling principles we can observe here is the use of a question. It can show your interest and concern for that person. You do not want to pry into someone’s affairs and try to get unnecessary information. You *do* want to open the door for someone to talk. Often it is a matter of being in the right place at the right time. Of course, God is the one who puts you in that place!

The two followers of Christ on the road stopped walking when Jesus opened the door for them to talk with him. They were surprised that he was not sad like they were. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

This story occurred after Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, so of course he knew very well what had happened. He wanted to engage the two men in conversation and hear what they were thinking. As a counselor you should think *with* the person, not think *for* them. Remember to let them talk, talk, and talk. As they talk the Holy Spirit will help you formulate your response.

So, Jesus asked a further question to gather information. “What things?”

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to

death, and they crucified him. We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. ... it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive.”

The men had many concerns about Jesus, many issues, and many questions: He was a great man. He was crucified. He was buried. His body is gone. Some say he is alive. They thought he was going to deliver Israel. After hearing all their concerns, Jesus took time to remind them that “the Christ had to suffer.” He explained to them some of the passages written by Moses and the prophets about the Messiah. Many issues were discussed as Christ and his followers walked and talked. As they were talking Christ did not address their main concern, “Where is Jesus?” There were many pieces of information, but not their most important one, “What has happened to Jesus?”

The Bible says, “As they approached the village ... Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, ‘Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.’ So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight” (Luke 24:13-31).

Christ opened their eyes through the familiar breaking of the bread. They knew it was him. In this story the concern was, “Where is Jesus?” Christ's solution was to open their eyes. The two men asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” You could say, “He reasoned with them.” Reasoning and guidance are the role of the counselor.

Often you may not be the first person contacted when trouble comes. And you may not be the last person someone goes to for help. Trust the Holy Spirit to give you wise counsel for this hurting individual. As you listen to them talk, focus on gathering information and on what they are saying. The Holy Spirit will help you discern which of their concerns is the main one. The underlying question may not even be expressed clearly. This is the one needing the counselor's attention. When you understand the person's real concern, you can help them understand it too. Then the Holy Spirit will guide you both to a solution.

This lesson is **important** because it emphasizes again the counseling principles of coming alongside people. In love and concern, you carefully listen as they talk. In addition, the story focuses on Jesus' use of questions to draw people into discussion.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that by following the example of Jesus you can help people to sort out their many issues. Thus you can understand what their real question is. Then the Holy Spirit can minister to them.

To **review** this lesson, answer the following questions:

1. What did Jesus ask as he came up to the two men on the road? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” you are correct.

2. What was the main concern in all that they said? [Pause]

A. If you said that their main concern was “Where is Jesus?” you are correct.

3. How did Jesus solve their concern? [Pause]

A. If you said, “He opened their eyes by doing something familiar, and they knew it was him,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened. Then retell the story in your own words. Listen carefully to a conversation between you and two other persons. Notice how many different concerns are discussed in that conversation. See if you can tell what main concern is being spoken about. Only observe, do not offer a solution. Remember to let the other two people talk, talk, and talk while you listen, listen, and listen.