

Soul Care

Learning to Listen Well

To capitalize on the potential of small groups, remember four “Don’ts” and three “Do’s”:

Four Don’ts

1. Don’t *only* be empathic.
Simply feeling understood does not cause growth.
What about brokenness and repentance?
2. Don’t *quickly* give advice.
Offering verses, Biblical principles (for second-things blessings)
because we want to be important to the person, or
because we don’t want to hear a mess we have no solution for, etc.
3. Don’t *glibly* offer to pray.
Covering over inadequacy by doing something “spiritual”
Backing away from inability to move into the person’s life
4. Don’t *easily* suggest professional help.
Soul Care belongs to the God-obsessed community.

“Thinking Passion”
What is the real battle going on in me?
What self obsession might be driving my responses?
What would a God-obsessed response look like?

Three Do’s

1. Be present.
“Lead with your ears, not with your mouth” (James 1:19).
“Show up and shut up.” Eugene Peterson
2. Be curious.
Explore, ask questions.
“Tell me what that is like for you. I’d love to know, tell me more.”
Not just “How can you avoid saying harsh things?” but “What is the tension within you that makes you want to say those things?”
3. Be discerning.
Where is the real battle?
Flesh vs. Spirit
Self obsession vs. God obsession
Making life work vs. resting in the presence of God

“Thinking Beneath”
What is the real battle going on in the other person?
What is the struggle he or she is having between self obsession and God obsession?

Hearing is more important than helping.

Listening, joining in the journey is more important than solving problems.

“The unique purpose of telling stories in a small group is to draw on the presence, curiosity, and discernment of several close friends in order to be lifted out of our self-obsessed narcissism into the God-obsessed freedom of fulfilling God’s kingdom, of telling His story through our lives.”

The “Do’s and Don’ts” are guidelines, not rules, but they are helpful in the discipline of listening. Read through each of them. Which would help you the most as a listener? How can your listening improve the Soul Care you offer to others?

Adapted from Guide to Soul Care, NewWay Ministries, 2006