

The Spiritual Discipline and Art of Christian Listening

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's "The Ministry of Listening" *Life Together*

- a. "Christians have forgotten that the ministry of listening has been committed to us by Him who is Himself the great listener and whose work we should share." (p. 98-99)
- b. "It is God's love for us that He not only gives us His Word but also lends us His ear...Christians, especially ministers, so often think they must always contribute something when they are in the company of others, that this is the one service they have to render. They forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking." (p.97)

2. When We Listen—Rachel Naomi Remen

Listening is the oldest and perhaps the most powerful tool of healing. It is often through the quality of our listening and not the wisdom of our words that we are able to effect the most profound changes in the people around us. When we listen, we offer with our attention an opportunity for wholeness. Our listening creates sanctuary for the homeless parts within the other person. That which has been denied, unloved, devalued by themselves and others. That which is hidden. In this culture the soul and the heart too often go homeless.

Listening creates a holy silence. When you listen generously to people, they can hear the truth in themselves, often for the first time. And in the silence of listening, you can know yourself in everyone. Eventually you may be able to hear, in everyone and beyond everyone, the unseen singing softly to itself and to you.

3. "Listening is where love begins"--Mister Rogers (Rev. Fred Rogers).

4. Suggested Resources on Christian Listening

- a. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (HarperCollins, 1954).
- b. Thomas N. Hart, *The Art of Christian Listening* (Paulist Press, 1980).
- c. Mima Baird, "To Care is to Listen," in S. Phillips and P. Benner, *The Crisis of Care: Affirming and Restoring Caring Practices in the Helping Professions* (Georgetown Press, 1994).
- d. Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction* (Cowley Publications, 1992).
- e. Jean Stairs, *Listening for the Soul: Pastoral Care and Spiritual Direction* (Augsburg Fortress, 2000).
- f. Eugene H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Eerdmans, 1989).