

REFLECTIONS

April 20, 2008

**if you call out for insight and
cry aloud for understanding,
then you will understand the
fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.**

Proverbs 2:3, 5

Power for Healing

They had lived with so much insecurity, so much dissension, so much distrust, and new events had led to even more. No wonder the people throughout the company were so emotionally charged. As the new, leader James had his hands full—he may have been new, but that offered little reason for anyone to trust him more than those before him. The employees of this unnamed company were fed up with all of the insecurity.

Then one by one, James sat with the people who wanted to talk with him. He listened patiently to their concerns, complaints, and fears. All he offered was hope, but there was little reason for them to share it. Yet, James had met their needs. “I feel heard,” one of them said as she concluded her time with him, “Thank you for listening to me.”

As a witness to it all, I was astonished. James offered them no solutions; he cast no judgment on their views; he made no attempt to persuade them from their positions. He only listened—not only to hear, but to capture every fragment of their desires, every morsel of their beliefs, and every wisp of their emotions. His objective was to understand. He could seek agreement later.

The result was amazing. Through listening James carried the power for healing into a broken place. With each person, he listened intently as they expressed their views, their desires, their beliefs, and their emotions. Never once did he challenge their perspectives. Neither his agreement with them nor their agreement with him was important. All that mattered was for him to understand—for them to be heard.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “*The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as to love God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love to our brethren is learning to listen to them. [Christians] forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking.*”

Listening to others reaches beyond selfish desires to provide an act of service, an act of caring, an act of loving your neighbor. That is what Christ asks us to do. And just as it restored trust in the company James led, listening offers a power for healing to those we love, in the places we work, and beyond to a broken world.

“You are the light of the world,”

Richard +

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