# **Leading Others in Listening Prayer**

By applying empathic listening skills and listening in prayer, we can begin to pray for others for their growth and healing. (Of course, they need to be open to healing. Our job is never to fix people.) But praying with someone else can be pretty straightforward if they are open to the Holy Spirit’s leading.

First and foremost, you need to listen. As someone is sharing their story, listen for keywords. What are they struggling with? What areas of confusion need clarity? What topics are currently being discussed? Consider the following narrative.

*“I woke up today and couldn’t get out of bed again. I was having a panic attack. I knew my children needed to eat breakfast, but I couldn’t bear the thought of caring for them. Then, I felt guilty because I wasn’t helping my kids. I just don’t know what to do. I’m so afraid!”*

**Group Discussion:** What was the parent feeling? How would you summarize their story so far? What keywords might be good for creating prayer questions?

Remember, listening prayer is all about creating concise questions that we can present to God in prayer. Ultimately, these questions should be relevant to what the prayer recipient is saying. In this case, a few concise questions might be:

1. *“God, would you show this parent where the panic comes from?”*
2. *“Lord, when did this panic start in their life?”*
3. *“Father, would you show them; do they need to be afraid?”*
4. *“God, what do you want to say about this parent’s situation?”*
5. *“Lord, what do you want to say about their children’s breakfast?”*

One goal of listening prayer is to replace lies with truth. The questions we ask will impact how quickly the prayer recipient can receive the truth. As prayer ministers, our job is to ask insightful and Spirit-led questions that expose lies and lead them into truth. It’s God’s job to reveal the Word to the listener. Unlike other prayer ministry models, our goal is not to prophesy or speak what we hear over people. Our desire is for them to hear for themselves. Don’t worry, God is always speaking!

In this scenario, asking question #5 will likely yield the least fruit. Not that it is bad, but God talking to them about their breakfast will not deal with their chronic panic or guilt. Asking questions about breakfast and their children will likely yield comforting but more superficial answers.

Similarly, while good, asking question #3 has a pretty obvious answer. (It’s a yes/no question, which is not ideal!) Most believers know that God doesn’t want us to be fearful. There are many verses in scripture to confirm we shouldn’t be afraid. The person likely knows these scriptures and yet is still fearful. Why? Because their lie-based beliefs are still in play. As long as we believe the lie, we live as though the lie is true, and we won’t experience the fruit of the Spirit, especially peace.

Ideally, we go after the roots. Just like cutting off a tree branch won’t take down the tree, going after superficial lies will likely not result in a great life transformation. It’s better to go after core lies when the prayer recipient is open to that because it will yield more freedom when they experience the truth. In this case, we have a parent with a chronic issue. Chances are this began in their childhood and has yet to be resolved. Year after year has gone by, and the small roots have grown and are now expressing themselves in paralyzing panic. If you can identify the circumstantial trigger and the lie, there’s a good chance the truth will uproot this mindset and the resulting behaviors in one-fell-swoop.

Periodically, pausing prayer and summarizing what you’ve learned in the prayer session so far is helpful. The best way to keep track is to take good notes. Good notes are generally not word-for-word but concepts and how one thought leads to another. Good notes do, however, include the exact phraseology of the lies and truths God has spoken. Don’t paraphrase their keywords! Using their exact verbiage for key concepts is important.

For example, it is ok to say in a summary:

*“It sounds like you came for prayer today feeling* ***panicked*** *and* ***guilty*** *for not knowing how to take care of your children. When we prayed about this, God showed you that as a child, you embraced the lie* ***“I am a failure”*** *because of what your parents said to you. Now, whenever your kids need something, the lie gets triggered, and you feel panic as a result. Does this sound right to you?”*

Use terms that give them permission to disagree with you or provide a different perspective whenever possible. Try not to lead the person or presume you know. You might say, “But this is my story, and I’ve prayed for many people with this issue before!” Indeed, there aren’t all that many core lies people believe. With a little practice, you will begin seeing repeat themes. That said, your job is not to lead the prayer recipient but to walk with them. Consider it this way. Jesus is their Bridegroom, and they are His bride. They are fearful, broken, ashamed, etc. Your job is to take their hand and place it in Jesus’ hand. You’re facilitating a truth encounter with Him, the living Word. Our job isn’t to fix people but to point them to Christ. Like a woman giving birth, it’s inappropriate to tell her to “hurry up” or “slow down.” It is not your timeline, and it is not your journey! We ***get*** to be a part of what God is doing in their life. That’s it.

## **Why pray in community?**

We each hear from the Lord and should practice listening and obeying the Spirit’s leading. As you practice listening, you will find many of your habits and hangups can be resolved through prayer. However, deep, life-long, core lies often make it hard to receive God’s input. Inadvertently, we’ve built our identities and lives around lies. Our worldview has become jaded, and we have difficulty hearing God in these places. This is where community comes in. Our loving, grace-based brothers and sisters in the Lord can help us in these difficult places. The Church is one body, built to support and nurture each other. People often find healing in community where they haven’t been able to personally. Consider James 5:17 seriously. We are commanded to live in community and even confess our sins to one another “to be healed.” How are we doing at being obedient to that scripture?

## **Considerations for a basic Prayer Session**

An ideal prayer session has built-in accountability through location and the people present. Typically, we try to find a prayer leader (Pilot) and an assistant (Co-Pilot) to host the prayer session. This provides a team atmosphere and accountability for the prayer ministers. Pick a time and location that are conducive to “walking in the light as He is in the light” (1 John 1:5-7). Meeting in a public place or a room with a window is preferable to someone’s basement. Let the Spirit lead you in this.

Also, consider the person you’re praying for. If it’s a young woman who you know has a backstory of abuse from men, you may not want a man to be the prayer leader. Ask the prayer recipient who they are comfortable with. Perhaps this session would best be hosted by two women. Love is the goal here. Consider how we can love the prayer recipient well (John 13:34-35).

That said, we must grow up in the body of Christ past our immature and carnal thinking. Too often, we’ve labeled something as a “male” or “female” problem. The reality is we all struggle with similar things. Yes, they look slightly different in men and women, but with time, you’ll see we aren’t all that different. Love is the method and motivation. Be led by the Holy Spirit.

We must mature into the place of being “fathers” and “mothers” and “brothers” and “sisters” (1 Tim 5:1-3). Would you look perversely upon your mother or father? I hope not! We need our minds renewed to see each other in love. People are not defined or valued based on their issues. Their value comes from being made by God in His image (Gen 1:27, Psalm 139:13-15). Therefore, as we become more sanctified, we can move past childish thinking (1 Cor 13:11). This also applies to ministry. Sometimes, a male prayer minister is needed in a woman’s session.

Check your motives. Ask the Lord what your motivations are for being in this session. Do you feel you must be in this session? Do you need to fix someone? Do you think you’re the only one that can help this person? The reality is you’re not the only one. It’s actually God’s Spirit that brings freedom, not you. There should be a sense of peace when setting up the details of the session. Sometimes, we need to wait on the Lord for the timing and details to come together.