



### Chalice Lighting

Listening helps us find our way. The listening of therapists allows us to navigate our way through life. We turn to prayer to hear God's guidance. We listen to experts so we can get ahead. Like a flashlight that leads us through the darkness, listening helps us stay on course. And yet maybe there's more to it than that. What if listening doesn't just guide us through the world, but also *creates* our world. ~ from the Introduction

**Check-in** *Share your highs and lows since we last met focusing on what drains you and what lifts you up. We give each other the gift of listening without asking questions or offering advice to allow people the safety to share what's in their hearts.*

**Introduction** Consider that old story about the cricket and the coins. Two people are walking down a busy city street. Everyone is rushing to and from their work, trying to get ahead. One of the friends turns to the other and says, "Do you hear that? It's a cricket!" The other friend responds with skepticism, but after focusing his attention finally hears it. "Wow," he says, "How did you hear that cricket with all the noise around us?" His friend responds, "It's all about how I was raised, about what I was taught to listen for." He goes on, "Here, I'll show you something." The friend then reaches into his pocket and pulls out a handful of coins - nickels, quarters, dimes - and he drops them on the sidewalk. Everyone who was rushing by stops... to listen.

### Spiritual Exercises

#### **Option A: Practice the Art of Listening**

We practice to become good musicians. We practice to become good athletes. We practice to become good artists. But somehow we've been led to believe that we don't have to practice to become good listeners. So let's spend the month focusing on and practicing **just one listening skill**. Yes, spend the *month*! After all, it's not really practicing if you only do it a few times. So keep your chosen listening skill/tactic in your back pocket and look for opportunities to use it. And if you are looking for motivation to stick with it, just remind yourself of the words of pastor and minister David Augsburger, "Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable." Knowing that we are getting better at loving, not just listening, will surely make the practicing worth every minute.

Oh, "What listening skill might I choose?" you ask. Well, we've found a few that seem manageable, impactful and most needed. Here you go:

Stop Interrupting by [taking a breath](#) and/or [looking them in the eye](#) or using the [80-20 rule](#)

"Go on." & "Tell me more."

(i.e. "Empty the bucket") <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpnNsSyDw-g&t=47s>

"Will you tell me your story?" and "I'd love to know how you came to this point of view."

<https://urbanconfessional.org/blog/howtodisagree>

#### **Option B: Ask About Deep Listening**

One of the best ways to explore our monthly themes is to have conversations about them with people who are close to you. It's also a great way to deepen our relationships! Below is a list of questions to help you on your way. Be sure to let your conversation partner know in advance that this won't be a typical conversation. Telling them a bit about Soul Matters will help set the stage. *Remember to also answer the questions yourself as they are meant to support a conversation, not just a time of quizzing them.* Come to your group ready to share what surprised you about the conversation(s) and what gift or insight it gave you. As always, keep a lookout for how your inner voice is trying to send you a message of comfort or challenge through these conversions with others.

## Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

The first duty of love is to listen. ~ Paul Tillich

Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable.  
~ David Augsburger

When someone deeply listens to you it is like holding out a dented cup you've had since childhood and watching it fill up with cold, fresh water. When it balances on top of the brim, you are understood. When it overflows and touches your skin, you are loved. ~ [John Fox](#)

## Questions

*Pick the one question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go.*

-On a scale of 1-10, how good of a listener are you? Tell a story to help me understand why you named the number that you did.

-What type of people do you have the hardest time listening to?

-Thinking back to your childhood, what did you learn about listening by watching your parents interact with each other?

-Have you ever heard the ocean or the woods or the sky speak?

-If you could go back to a conversation and correct how you listened, what conversation would that be?

-Do you believe that our bodies carry a wisdom that our minds don't? If so, tell about a time when the wisdom of your body "saved" you or helped you avoid a mess. Was there ever a time that you regret not listening to your body?

-If I were to put my ear down to the ground of *your* life, what questions would I hear bubbling [beneath the surface](#)?

-How have your wounds and losses altered the way you listen?

-How good are you at listening compassionately to yourself?

**Sitting in Silence** *Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts.*

**Sharing/Deep Listening** *Respond with your thoughts and experiences with the topic. We create a safe space by listening deeply and not responding. When sharing, connect with what is true for you. When listening, give the speaker your full attention rather than thinking about what you will share.*

**Reflection and Gratitude** *This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared. Consider lifting up one comment or experience for which you are particularly grateful.*

## Extinguishing the Chalice

Now if you listen closely

I'll tell you what I know

Storm clouds are gathering

The wind is gonna blow

The human race is suffering

And I can hear the moan,

'Cause nobody, but nobody

Can make it out here alone.

[Maya Angelou](#)