

Weekly Devotions: LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER 13

Listen More, Talk Less

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book *Life Together: A Discussion of Christian Fellowship* wrote; “The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Love for God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to each other. It is God’s love for us that He not only gives us His Word but also lends us His ear. So, it is His work that we do for our brother (or sister) when we learn to listen to him (or her).”

Bonhoeffer emphasized that listening is a greater service than speaking. Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians, because we are busy talking when we should be listening. Bonhoeffer said; “The ministry of listening has been committed to us by Jesus who is Himself the great Listener and whose example we should follow. We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God.”

To ‘listen with the ears of God’ is to listen without judging but to listen with compassion and empathy. Often when we are ministering to someone facing life’s problems, wisdom is to be silent and to listen (Job 13: 5).

To listen does not mean to remain silent all the time; there are times when our silence may be misconstrued as lack of interest or endorsement of untruths. But when we speak let our speech be gracious and avoid casting guilt on the other. Always ask ourselves what would Jesus say to this person and how would He say it?

Read James 1: 19-20; Eph 4: 29-32

Questions to ponder

1. What did James advise the early believers to do (James 1: 19)? What stop us from being good listeners? List three things you need to do in order to be a good listener either to a loved one or to the people you are ministering to.
2. How should we guard our speech with those in the church (Eph 4: 29) and what vices should we get rid of (31)? How are we to relate to one another (32)?
3. How would you respond when you are faced with the following situations? At a cell meeting or small group gathering one of the members began to:
 - Say unkind things about the pastor or one of the leaders in the church.
 - Introduce teachings which are biblically incorrect.
 - Share his position about divorce and remarriage which differs from yours.

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