

WEEK 6: LEARNING TO LISTEN

Detailed Facilitator Guide with Notes and Questions

OVERVIEW FOR FACILITATORS

Week 6 Goal: Help participants develop the capacity to genuinely listen—to God, to their own hearts, and to other people—without immediately redirecting attention to themselves.

The Core Issue: Narcissism is fundamentally a listening disorder. The narcissist's internal monologue is so loud, so constant, so demanding that they cannot truly hear anyone else. Every conversation is an opportunity to talk about themselves, relate everything back to their experience, or prepare what they'll say next.

The Progression:

- Weeks 1-2: Saw patterns and harm
- Week 3: Let false self die
- Week 4: Faced emptiness
- Week 5: Released control
- **Week 6:** Learn to actually hear others—to be quiet, receptive, and attentive

Why This Week Is Critical: Until participants can listen, they cannot have genuine relationships. Love requires attention. Intimacy requires hearing. Connection requires presence—not performance, not strategizing, not waiting to speak.

THE ANATOMY OF NARCISSISTIC "LISTENING"

What Narcissists Do Instead of Listening

The Internal Broadcast:

- Constant inner commentary: "How does this relate to me?"
- Planning next response instead of hearing current words
- Judging speaker: "Am I more interesting than they are?"
- Evaluating usefulness: "How can I use this information?"
- Comparing: "My experience was worse/better/more interesting"

Conversational Hijacking:

- Interrupting mid-sentence
- "That reminds me of when I..."
- Redirecting to own story
- One-upping: "You think that's bad..."
- Minimizing to shift focus: "Oh that's nothing, listen to this..."

Pseudo-Listening:

- Nodding but not absorbing
- Waiting for pause to insert own agenda
- Hearing words but not meaning
- Preparing argument/defense while other speaks
- Selective hearing—only catching what relates to self

Why Narcissists Don't Listen:

1. **The inner voice is louder than outer voices:** Their self-referential thoughts drown out others
2. **Others exist as supporting cast:** Not as real people with inner lives as complex as their own
3. **Conversations are stages:** For performance, not connection

4. **Vulnerability of silence:** If they're not talking, they're not controlling
 5. **Fear of insignificance:** If conversation isn't about them, they disappear
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WHAT MAKES THIS WEEK DANGEROUS

Resistance Patterns to Expect

Performance of Listening:

- Exaggerated nodding, "I'm listening SO well now!"
- Turning listening into new form of narcissistic supply
- "Look how empathetic I am!" (still making it about them)
- Competing to be the best listener in the group

Frustration and Boredom:

- "Other people are boring when I can't talk about myself"
- Irritation at conversational constraint
- Feeling like they're disappearing in conversations
- Anger: "Why should I care about their mundane problems?"

Anxiety:

- Silence feels like death
- Not knowing what to say if they can't talk about themselves
- Fear of being thought stupid or uninteresting
- Panic at not controlling the conversation

Spiritual Bypassing:

- "I'm listening to God" (while ignoring humans)
- Using prayer as excuse to not engage

- Claiming to hear God's voice (as new source of specialness)
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OPENING SESSION (Day 1)

Transition from Week 5 (15 minutes)

Facilitator Script:

"Last week, you practiced releasing control. That was hard—anxiety-provoking, uncomfortable, requiring constant vigilance.

This week, we're addressing a specific form of control: conversational control. The way you dominate through speaking, redirect to yourself, interrupt, or simply don't hear others because your internal broadcast is too loud.

Narcissism is a listening disorder. Not because you can't physically hear, but because you're so preoccupied with yourself that others don't really exist as fully real to you. They're supporting characters in your story, not the protagonists of their own.

This week, you're learning to be quiet. To listen. To attend to another person's inner life with the same focus you've been giving to your own.

This will feel like extinction. When you're not talking about yourself, you might feel like you're disappearing. That's actually the point—the narcissistic self needs to get smaller so you can see others.

What we're NOT saying:

- You should never talk about yourself
- Your experiences don't matter
- You should be silent always
- Listening means you have no voice

What we ARE saying:

- Right now, you talk about yourself 70-90% of conversational time

- You redirect conversations to yourself compulsively
- You don't really hear others—you're too busy thinking about yourself
- This prevents genuine connection

This week: Listen more than you speak. Hear more than you're heard. Attend more than you're attended to.

James says: 'Be quick to hear, slow to speak.' (James 1:19)

That's your assignment."

Opening Check-In (Go Around Circle)

Question: *"On a typical day, what percentage of your mental energy is spent on your internal monologue about yourself vs. actually attending to others? Be honest."*

Facilitator Note: Most will say 80-95% is internal/self-focused. That's the starting point. No shame—just data.

SCRIPTURE FOUNDATION EXPLORATION (35 minutes)

James 1:19 - "Quick to Hear, Slow to Speak"

Read aloud: James 1:19-25

Focus on verse 19: "This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger."

Facilitator Teaching (12 minutes):

"James gives a three-part instruction for healthy communication:

1. Quick to hear
2. Slow to speak
3. Slow to anger

Notice the order: Hearing comes FIRST. Before speaking. Before reacting.

'Quick to hear' (*tachus eis to akousai* in Greek):

- Eager, ready, swift to listen
- Prioritizing understanding over being understood
- Leaning in, not away

'Slow to speak' (*bradus eis to lalesai*):

- Deliberate, measured, not rushing to insert yourself
- Thinking before speaking
- Speaking only when you have something to add (not just to be heard)

'Slow to anger' (*bradus eis orgen*):

- Not reacting defensively
- Not needing to be right immediately
- Hearing without feeling attacked

For the narcissist, this is backwards. The typical pattern:

1. Quick to speak (must insert self immediately)
2. Slow to hear (not really listening, planning response)
3. Quick to anger (defensive when criticized or not centered)

James is recalibrating: What if you were eager to understand others and slow to promote yourself?

Verse 22: 'Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.'

James warns against hearing without doing. But you can't DO the word if you don't genuinely HEAR it first—or hear others."

Discussion Questions:

1. **"Honestly—are you quicker to hear or quicker to speak? What's your default?"**
 2. **"What happens in conversations when you're 'slow to speak'—when you pause before responding?"**
 - Most won't know because they never pause
 3. **"When someone is talking, what's happening in your head? Are you hearing them, or planning what you'll say?"**
 4. **"James connects slow to speak with slow to anger. Why do you think that is?"**
 - Defensiveness and interrupting are linked—both about control
 5. **"What would your relationships look like if you were genuinely 'quick to hear, slow to speak'?"**
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Psalm 46:10 - "Be Still, and Know That I Am God"

Read aloud: Psalm 46:1-11

Focus on verse 10: "Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

Facilitator Teaching (12 minutes):

"The traditional translation is 'Be still,' but the Hebrew (*raphah*) literally means 'let go,' 'release,' 'cease striving,' 'be quiet.'

'Be still and know that I am God':

- Stop the noise
- Cease the frantic activity
- Let go of control

- And in that stillness—KNOW God

You cannot know God in the noise. You cannot hear His voice when your inner monologue is constant. You cannot experience His presence when you're performing.

For the narcissist: The inner broadcast is relentless. Planning, evaluating, comparing, defending, promoting. There's no stillness. And therefore, no real knowing of God.

'Be still' is a prerequisite for 'know that I am God.'

Context of Psalm 46: This is written during a time of chaos—nations raging, kingdoms falling (v.6). God says: In the midst of chaos, BE STILL.

Not 'fix it,' not 'control it,' not 'talk about it.' Be still.

The invitation: What if you stopped?

- Stopped the internal commentary
- Stopped planning your next words
- Stopped managing impressions
- Just... stopped.

In that stillness, you might actually hear God. You might actually experience presence instead of performance.

This applies to listening to people too: You can't truly hear someone when your mind is noisy with self-reference. You have to be still internally to be present externally."

Discussion Questions:

1. **"When was the last time you were truly still—internally quiet, not managing or planning or evaluating?"**
 - For many: Never. Or childhood.

2. **"What makes stillness terrifying? What are you afraid you'll hear in the silence?"**
 3. **"The psalmist says 'Be still and KNOW that I am God.' What's the connection between stillness and knowing?"**
 4. **"How does your inner noise prevent you from knowing God? From knowing others?"**
 5. **"What would it take for you to be still—truly quiet internally—for even 5 minutes?"**
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John 10:27 - "My Sheep Hear My Voice"

Read aloud: John 10:1-30

Focus on verse 27: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."

Facilitator Teaching (10 minutes):

"Jesus says His sheep HEAR His voice. Not just hear about Him, but hear Him directly.

But here's the question: If Jesus is speaking, why don't we hear Him?

The problem isn't Jesus's volume. It's our attention.

We're too busy talking—to ourselves, about ourselves, at God (not with God)—to actually hear Him.

'My sheep hear My voice':

- Implies relationship, not just information
- Requires quietness and attention
- Means learning to distinguish His voice from:
 - Your own desires

- Cultural noise
- Your ego's demands
- Others' expectations

'And I know them':

- Jesus knows His sheep
- But do His sheep know Him? Only if they're listening.

'And they follow Me':

- Following requires hearing WHERE He's going
- Can't follow if you're not listening

For the narcissist: You've been speaking AT God (demanding, explaining, justifying, performing) rather than listening TO God.

You've been telling God what you need, what you want, how things should be. When was the last time you were quiet enough to hear Him?

This week's spiritual practice: Learning to listen to God by shutting down the inner broadcast long enough to hear."

Discussion Questions:

1. **"Do you hear God's voice? How do you distinguish it from your own thoughts/desires?"**
2. **"What percentage of your prayer life is speaking vs. listening?"**
 - Most: 95% speaking, 5% listening (if that)
3. **"Jesus says 'My sheep hear My voice.' What prevents you from hearing Him?"**
4. **"What would change in your life if you listened to God as much as you talked to (or at) God?"**

5. "How might learning to listen to God help you learn to listen to people?"

DAILY PRACTICES INSTRUCTION

Morning Practice: 25-Minute Listening Meditation (Days 1-7)

Detailed Instructions for Participants:

"This week, extend your morning silence to 25 minutes, with a specific focus: LISTENING.

Not listening for specific content, but learning to listen—to cultivate receptivity, openness, attention without agenda.

Three Movements (25 minutes total):

Movement 1: Listen to Silence (8 minutes)

- Sit quietly
- Notice the sounds around you (don't label or analyze—just hear)
- Notice the silence between sounds
- When your mind starts narrating ("That's a bird," "I need to do X"), gently return to just hearing
- You're not trying to hear anything specific—just practicing receptivity

Movement 2: Listen to Your Heart (8 minutes)

- Shift attention inward
- What's your heart saying underneath the noise?
- Not your thoughts (those are loud already), but your deeper self
- What do you need? What are you feeling? What's true beneath performance?
- Just listen—don't analyze or solve

Movement 3: Listen to God (9 minutes)

- Ask: "God, what do You want me to hear today?"
- Then be quiet
- Don't rush to fill the silence
- Don't perform a spiritual experience
- Just be available, receptive, open
- If nothing comes, that's okay—you're practicing listening

What you'll experience:

- Constant urge to think, plan, narrate
- Boredom (listening feels passive compared to speaking)
- Anxiety (silence feels empty)
- Desire to make something happen
- Occasional moments of actual receptivity

What you're learning:

- To tolerate not being the speaker
- To be present without agenda
- To receive rather than generate
- That listening is active, not passive—it requires attention

After 25 minutes: Briefly journal—What did I hear? What was hard about listening?"

Throughout the Day: Practice Not Interrupting or Redirecting (Days 1-7)

Instructions:

"All day, in every conversation, practice two specific behaviors:

1. Don't interrupt

- Let people finish their sentences
- Let them finish their THOUGHTS (not just sentences)
- Count to 3 after they stop before you speak
- If you catch yourself about to interrupt, stop mid-word if necessary

2. Don't redirect to yourself

- When they share something, don't immediately relate it to your experience
- Resist: 'Oh, that reminds me of when I...'
- Resist: 'I know exactly what you mean, I...'
- Instead: Ask a follow-up question ABOUT THEM

How to practice:

WRONG:

- Them: 'I'm stressed about work.'
- You: 'Me too! My boss is impossible...' [REDIRECTING]

RIGHT:

- Them: 'I'm stressed about work.'
- You: 'What's going on? Tell me more.' [STAYING WITH THEM]

WRONG:

- Them: 'I'm thinking about—'
- You: 'Oh! You should—' [INTERRUPTING]

RIGHT:

- Them: 'I'm thinking about—'
- You: [WAIT. Let them finish. Then respond.]

Keep a tally: Each time you catch yourself about to interrupt/redirect and choose differently, mark it down. This builds awareness.

If you slip (you will):

- Stop mid-sentence: 'Sorry, I interrupted. Keep going.'
- Or: 'I just made that about me. Tell me more about you.'
- Acknowledge the pattern without wallowing

What you'll notice:

- You interrupt MORE than you realized
- You redirect CONSTANTLY
- When you stop, you don't know what to say
- But people lean in—they respond to being heard"

Evening Practice: What Did I Learn By Listening vs. By Talking? (Days 1-7)

Instructions:

"Each evening, journal in two columns:

Column 1: What I Learned Today By LISTENING

- What did I discover about others?
- What did I hear that I wouldn't have if I'd been talking?
- What did I learn about someone's inner life?
- What surprised me about what they shared?

Column 2: What I Learned Today By TALKING

- What did I gain by sharing my experience/opinion/story?
- Did talking add value or was it compulsive?
- What did I get from being heard?

Then compare:

- Which column is fuller?
- Which kind of learning is more about connection vs. self-focus?
- Where did you actually grow today—through listening or through talking?

Example:

By Listening:

- 'I learned my colleague is anxious about her mother's health—I never knew'
- 'My spouse feels unheard by me more than I realized'
- 'A friend is struggling with something I would have missed if I'd been talking about my day'

By Talking:

- 'I got to vent about my frustration' (valuable, but mostly self-serving)
- 'I told a story where I looked good' (feeding ego)
- 'I gave unsolicited advice' (controlling)

The insight: Listening teaches you about others. Talking about yourself teaches you... about yourself. You already know a lot about yourself. Maybe it's time to learn about others."

THE LISTENING CHALLENGE (Days 2-6)

Instructions for Participants

Facilitator Introduction (Day 2):

"This week's major assignment: Have 3 conversations (spread throughout the week) where you ONLY ask questions and listen. No sharing about yourself unless directly asked—and even then, answer briefly and redirect back to them.

This is the behavioral practice of listening."

Conversation 1: With Someone You're Close To (Day 2-3)

Setup:

- Choose someone you care about (spouse, friend, family member)
- Set aside 30-60 minutes
- Tell them upfront (optional): 'I'm practicing listening. Can I ask you some questions and just... listen?'

The Practice:

- Ask open-ended questions about THEM
- Listen without planning your response
- Follow up on what THEY say (not what it reminds you of)
- Don't share your parallel experience
- Don't give advice unless asked
- Just... be with them in their experience

Questions to ask:

- 'What's been on your heart lately?'
- 'What's something I don't know about how you're doing?'
- 'What's hard for you right now?'

- 'What are you hoping for?'
- 'What do you need that you're not getting?'
- [Follow-up questions based on their answers]

What NOT to do:

- 'That reminds me of...'
- 'I know exactly what you mean, I...'
- 'Here's what you should do...'
- 'At least you...' [minimizing]

After the conversation: Journal:

- What did I learn about this person?
- What did I want to say but didn't?
- What was hard about staying focused on them?
- How did they respond to being truly heard?

Conversation 2: With Someone You Typically Compete With (Day 3-4)

Setup:

- Choose someone you usually feel competitive with
- Could be: colleague, friend, family member
- Someone whose success/attention threatens you

The Practice:

- Ask about their life/work/experience
- Listen without comparing yourself
- Celebrate their success without "me too"-ing

- Be genuinely curious without needing to one-up

Internal work during conversation:

- Notice competitive thoughts: 'I've done that too,' 'Mine is better'
- Name them: 'There's competition'
- Let them pass
- Return to curiosity about THEM

Questions to ask:

- 'How's [project/life area] going?'
- 'What are you proud of lately?'
- 'What's working well for you?'
- 'What are you learning?'

The challenge: Can you be happy for them without needing to claim equal or better?

After: Journal—

- What was it like to listen without competing?
- What did I learn about them?
- What competitive thoughts came up?
- Could I let them have the spotlight?

Conversation 3: With Someone Whose Story Differs from Yours (Day 5-6)

Setup:

- Choose someone with different life experience
- Different background, worldview, struggles

- Someone you might typically judge or dismiss

The Practice:

- Genuinely seek to understand their perspective
- Listen to THEIR story without filtering it through YOUR experience
- Don't correct, debate, or convince
- Just learn

Approach:

- 'I want to understand your experience. Can you tell me about...?'
- 'What's that like for you?'
- 'Help me understand...'
- 'What do I not know about your reality?'

The challenge: Can you hear someone else's story without making it about yours?

After: Journal—

- What did I learn about a perspective different from mine?
 - Where did I want to assert my view?
 - Could I hold space for a story that isn't mine?
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Group Processing (Day 6-7)

Discussion Questions:

1. "What was it like to have 3 conversations where you couldn't talk about yourself?"
2. "Which conversation was hardest? The close relationship? The competitive one? The different perspective? Why?"

3. **"What did you learn about others that you wouldn't have learned if you'd been talking about yourself?"**
 4. **"How did people respond to being listened to? Did you notice anything?"**
 - Usually: They opened up more, seemed relieved, leaned in
 5. **"What was it like to stay with someone else's experience without redirecting to yours?"**
 6. **"Could you do this more often? What would change in your relationships?"**
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STUDYING JESUS AS LISTENER

The Woman at the Well (John 4)

Assignment (Day 3-4): Read John 4:1-42

Group Discussion (Day 4 or 5):

Facilitator Teaching (10 minutes):

"Watch how Jesus listens in this encounter:

Verse 7: Jesus initiates—'Give Me a drink'—but it's an invitation to conversation

Verses 9-10: The woman deflects (cultural/religious barriers). Jesus doesn't defend or explain. He pivots: 'If you knew... you would have asked Him.'

He's drawing her out, not performing.

Verses 16-18: Jesus addresses her real life situation—but notice, He doesn't immediately correct or condemn. He reveals He KNOWS her (sees her), which creates space for truth.

Verses 25-26: She mentions the Messiah. Jesus reveals Himself. But only AFTER listening to her, drawing her out, letting her story unfold.

The result (v.28-29): She leaves her water jar (the thing she came for) and runs to tell others. Being heard—being SEEN—changed her.

What Jesus does:

- Asks questions
- Lets her speak
- Doesn't rush to correct
- Sees past her deflections to her real need
- Makes space for her story
- Doesn't make it about proving His point

What Jesus doesn't do:

- Talk about Himself until it's relevant
- Lecture or condemn
- Interrupt or redirect
- Use her as a platform for His teaching
- Rush the conversation"

Discussion Questions:

1. **"What strikes you about how Jesus listens to this woman?"**
2. **"How is Jesus's listening different from how you typically engage in conversation?"**
3. **"Jesus asks questions and lets her unfold her story. Why is that powerful?"**
4. **"The woman is changed by being heard. When have you been changed by being listened to?"**

5. "How would your conversations be different if you listened like Jesus?"

Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42)

Assignment (Day 4-5): Read Luke 10:38-42

Group Discussion (Day 5 or 6):

Facilitator Teaching (10 minutes):

"This is a story about two sisters and two approaches to Jesus:

Martha: Busy, serving, distracted by preparations (v.40) **Mary:** Sitting at Jesus's feet, listening to His word (v.39)

Martha complains (v.40): 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Tell her to help me.'

Martha wants Jesus to join her in criticizing Mary. She wants Him to affirm her busyness.

Jesus's response (v.41-42): 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'

'Mary has chosen the good part': Sitting at Jesus's feet. Listening.

For the narcissist: You're Martha. Busy, performing, doing, serving (often to be seen/needed). You're 'worried and bothered about many things.'

What you're missing: The 'one thing necessary'—sitting still and LISTENING.

'Which shall not be taken away from her': What Mary gained by listening can't be lost. What Martha gained by performing can be lost.

The invitation: Stop doing. Stop performing. Stop even serving (for a moment). Just sit and listen.

Jesus isn't impressed by Martha's busyness. He values Mary's receptivity."

Discussion Questions:

1. "Are you more like Martha or Mary? Why?"
 - Most narcissists are Martha—busy, serving (to be needed), missing the 'one thing'
2. "Why do you think Jesus says listening is 'the good part' / 'the one thing necessary'?"
3. "What makes sitting still and listening harder than being busy and productive?"
4. "Martha is 'worried and bothered about many things.' What are you worried and bothered about that keeps you from listening?"
5. "What would it look like for you to choose 'the good part'—to sit at Jesus's feet and just listen?"

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER ON LISTENING

Reading Assignment (Throughout Week)

Assign: Read selections from *Life Together* on listening (Chapter 5 if available, or excerpts)

Key Bonhoeffer Quote: "The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as love to God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them."

Group Discussion (Day 6-7):

Discussion Questions:

1. "Bonhoeffer says listening is the **FIRST** service we owe others. Why first?"

2. **"He connects listening to God with listening to others. What's the connection?"**
 - Can't love God (who you can't see) if you won't listen to people (who you can see)
 3. **"Bonhoeffer says many people look for 'talkers' when they should be looking for 'listeners.' What does he mean?"**
 4. **"He warns against listening 'with half an ear' while planning our own speech. Where do you do this?"**
 5. **"Bonhoeffer says impatient, inattentive listening is a form of contempt. Do you agree?"**
 6. **"What would Christian community look like if everyone actually listened?"**
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THEOLOGICAL AND CLINICAL DEEPENING

Dr. Ramani Durvasula Quote Discussion

"Narcissism is a listening disorder—the inability to truly hear another person because the inner broadcast is always louder." — Dr. Ramani Durvasula

Facilitator Teaching (15 minutes):

"Durvasula captures the mechanism perfectly: The inner broadcast is always louder.

The narcissist's internal radio station plays 24/7:

- 'How do I look right now?'
- 'What should I say to impress them?'
- 'This reminds me of MY experience...'
- 'Are they admiring me?'

- 'How can I redirect this to me?'
- 'I'm more interesting than this...'

This broadcast is SO LOUD that other people's voices are drowned out.

It's not that narcissists CAN'T hear. It's that they're not available to hear because they're preoccupied with self-reference.

The result:

- Relationships feel one-sided
- People feel unseen, unheard, invisible around them
- Conversations always circle back to the narcissist
- Others stop sharing because what's the point?

Durvasula calls it a 'disorder': It's not just a preference for talking, it's an inability to genuinely attend to another person.

Recovery means: Turning down the volume on the inner broadcast so you can actually hear external voices.

This week: You're practicing turning down your volume. It feels like disappearing, but it's actually becoming present—to others, to God, to reality."

Discussion Questions:

1. "How loud is your 'inner broadcast'? What's playing on it most of the time?"
2. "When someone is talking to you, what percentage of your attention is on them vs. on your own thoughts?"
3. "Durvasula says the inner broadcast drowns out others. Can you think of specific times when you didn't really hear someone because you were thinking about yourself?"

4. **"What would it take to turn down the volume on your inner broadcast?"**
 5. **"What do you lose by not listening? What do others lose?"**
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Dietrich Bonhoeffer Quote Discussion

"The first service that one owes to others consists in listening to them. Just as love to God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for others is learning to listen to them." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Facilitator Teaching (15 minutes):

"Bonhoeffer makes a radical claim: Listening is SERVICE. It's not passive, not weak, not 'just' anything. It's the FIRST thing you owe others.

Why is listening service?

Because it gives others what they desperately need:

- To be seen
- To be heard
- To matter
- To exist fully in someone else's awareness
- To not be alone

When you listen, you're saying:

- 'You're real'
- 'You're worth my attention'
- 'Your inner life matters'
- 'I'm willing to set myself aside to be with you'

When you DON'T listen, you're saying:

- 'You're not as interesting as me'
- 'My thoughts are more important'
- 'You exist for my purposes'
- 'You're not fully real to me'

Bonhoeffer's connection: Love to God begins with listening to His Word. Love to others begins with listening to them.

Why? Because love requires KNOWING the beloved. You can't know someone without listening to them.

The narcissist's problem: You don't know the people in your life because you don't listen to them. You know ABOUT them (what they do for you), but not WHO THEY ARE.

This week: You're learning to serve others by giving them your attention. Real attention. Not waiting-to-talk, but genuine presence."

Discussion Questions:

1. "Does it surprise you that Bonhoeffer calls listening the 'first service'? Why or why not?"
 2. "How is listening service? What does it give the other person?"
 3. "Bonhoeffer says love begins with listening. Do you agree? Can you love someone without knowing them?"
 4. "Who in your life do you KNOW vs. know ABOUT? What's the difference?"
 5. "If you started serving others by listening, what would change in your relationships?"
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SPECIAL EXERCISE: ATTEND TO SOMEONE'S STORY WITH ZERO COMPARISON

Instructions (Day 5-6)

Facilitator Introduction:

"This is a specific, challenging exercise: Find someone and ask them to tell you their story—a significant experience, a struggle, a joy—and listen WITHOUT comparing it to yours.

The challenge: Every time a thought arises—'I've been through that too,' 'My experience was worse,' 'I understand because I...'—notice it and let it pass. Return to THEIR story.

Questions to ask:

- 'Will you tell me about [significant event/season]?'
- 'What was that like for you?'
- 'How did that affect you?'
- 'What did you learn?'
- 'How do you think about it now?'

Follow-up questions based on what THEY say (not what it reminds you of).

After they finish:

- Thank them
- Resist: 'I know exactly what you mean, I...'
- If you relate, you can say: 'Thank you for sharing that with me' (not 'I have a similar story')

Journal afterward:

- Whose story did I hear?
- What did I learn about them?

- What comparisons came up for me?
 - Was I able to let their story be theirs?
 - What was it like to not make it about me?"
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MANAGING RESISTANCE

"But I Have Things to Share Too"

Facilitator Response:

"Of course you do. And there's a place for that.

But right now, you need to build the muscle of listening because it's atrophied. You've been sharing at 90% capacity and listening at 10%. We're rebalancing.

This isn't forever. Healthy conversation is mutual. But you're not capable of mutuality yet because you dominate compulsively.

After you learn to listen, you can share. But for now, practice receiving others' stories without needing to tell yours.

Think of it like physical therapy: If your right arm is overdeveloped and your left is weak, you don't exercise them equally. You strengthen the weak one until there's balance.

Your speaking is overdeveloped. Your listening is weak. This week, we're strengthening listening."

"Other People Are Boring When I Can't Talk About Myself"

Facilitator Response:

"That's honest—and revealing.

The truth is: Other people aren't boring. You've just never learned to be interested in them because you're preoccupied with yourself.

Everyone has an inner life as rich as yours. Everyone has struggles, hopes, dreams, pain, joy. You just don't see it because you're not looking.

When you find others boring, it's because:

1. You're comparing their external life to your internal life (unfair comparison)
2. You're not asking good questions
3. You're not actually curious—you're waiting to talk
4. You've trained yourself to only be interested in yourself

This week's experiment: What if you approached others with genuine curiosity? 'What's it like to be you?' 'What do I not know?' 'Who are you when I'm not making it about me?'

You might discover: People are fascinating when you actually pay attention."

"I Feel Like I'm Disappearing When I'm Not Talking"

Facilitator Response:

"Yes. That's exactly what you're feeling. And it's revealing.

If you only exist when you're talking, your identity is built on performance—not on being.

You feel like you're disappearing because your sense of self requires being seen, heard, centered. When you're quiet, you panic: 'Do I even exist?'

But that's the lie of narcissism: You only exist when witnessed, admired, attended to.

The truth: You exist whether or not anyone is looking at you. You have inherent worth that doesn't depend on attention.

This week: You're learning that you can be quiet and still be real. You can listen and still exist. You can not be the center and still matter.

It feels like death because the false self IS dying. But your true self—the one who can genuinely connect—is being born."

FACILITATOR SELF-CARE

This week is deceptively simple but emotionally complex.

Watch for:

- Participants performing listening (new form of grandiosity)
- Frustration at not being able to talk about themselves
- Subtle ways they still redirect conversations
- Your own listening failures as facilitator

Remember:

- You're modeling listening in sessions
- Don't lecture too much—create space for them to process
- When they share, actually hear them (don't plan next teaching point)
- You're not exempt from this work

Self-care:

- Notice your own inner broadcast
 - Practice listening in your own life
 - Don't monopolize group time with your own stories/insights
 - Get supervision—this work is a mirror
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CLOSING THE WEEK (Day 7)

Final Reflection Questions

1. **"Complete this sentence: This week, I discovered that when I listen..."**
 2. **"What was hardest about not talking about yourself?"**
 3. **"What did you learn about others that you wouldn't have learned if you'd been talking?"**
 4. **"How did people respond to being genuinely heard by you?"**
 5. **"Can you imagine listening like this regularly? What would change?"**
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Facilitator Closing Words

"You've done vulnerable work this week—vulnerable in a different way. You've had to get quiet. To let others have the space. To hear instead of being heard.

Some of you felt like you were disappearing. Some of you were bored. Some of you were frustrated. All of that is information about how much you've needed conversations to be about you.

What you've learned:

- The inner broadcast is loud and constant
- Others have rich inner lives you've been missing
- Listening is active service, not passive waiting
- Being quiet doesn't mean you don't exist
- People respond when they're genuinely heard

The challenge going forward: Don't just do this for a week. Make it a practice. Listen more than you speak. Hear more than you're heard. Attend to others as fully as you've been attending to yourself.

Next week: We're moving into rebuilding—Phase III of the program. We've done the hard work of awakening and emptying. Now we start constructing a

self grounded in truth and connection. Week 7 focuses on the practice of humility.

You're ready. You've proven you can do this.

Let's close:

'God, You have been speaking, and we haven't been listening. Others have been speaking, and we've been too busy thinking about ourselves to hear. This week, we turned down the volume on our inner broadcast just a little. We practiced listening. Thank You for what we heard—about You, about others, about ourselves. Teach us to be quick to hear and slow to speak. Teach us to love by listening. Give us the humility to let others exist as fully as we want to exist. Amen.'

END WEEK 6

RESOURCES FOR DEEPER STUDY

On Listening:

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (Chapter on Ministry of Listening)
- Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out* (on hospitality and listening)
- Eugene Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor* (on pastoral listening)

Practices:

- Ignatian listening (hearing God in all things)
- Quaker practice of waiting in silence
- Centering prayer (continued from Week 5)

Clinical:

- Marshall Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication* (on empathic listening)

- Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person* (on client-centered listening)