

GLIMPSE

Keep Listening

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Maybe you have heard the statement about the two types of people. One group always finishes what they begin and so forth. We love to categorize others and sometimes ourselves. We can excuse or accuse others because they are extroverts, thinkers, churchgoers, or even because they are of the Irish inclinations. Putting people in boxes frees us to relate, or not, more easily with the surprising nature of relationships.

Here are two kinds of people in my limited experience. I have not met everyone in the world yet, but there is a segment of persons who, when I speak about something either semi or very personally, invite me to keep talking, to keep revealing and who help me to hear what I am saying. They can do this in several ways. They can just keep silent and present. They can physically or verbally let me know they want to hear more. They seem to take what I am saying, not as a problem, but a gift that is slowly being unwrapped. They give me the gift of time.

The other group, and I confess that I tend to avoid them, is not so interested in what I am saying and how their listening can help me listen to myself. If I say that I am reading this book, or saw this movie or had some experience long ago, well, they actually take it away from me. They can hardly wait for me to stop speaking, because they want me to listen to them. They quickly interrupt with a book they are reading, or a game they have watched. What I share becomes a stimulus for their memories or imaginations or their need to talk about themselves. I am left with my experience having been put aside as seemingly unimportant.

These experiences bring me to my relationship with God. In reading and praying with Scripture, it seems that God begins speaking and I pick it up as a stimulus to begin talking about me to God and then the prayer is all about me and how not-okay I feel, compared to the goodness of God and Jesus and Mary and all the other Gospelites whom God had blessed. God speaks about God and I take it away and jump into my self-improvement process and project. The verses of the Word of God can seem to be indictments and accusations, directed at me and my lack of generous response. Prayer then becomes a depressing self-diminishing experience with a little bit of hope that just maybe today I'll be and do better.

Take for example the parable of the farmer who went out planting seeds. It does seem this fellow wasn't too careful. Some seed fell on a well-trodden part, some fell on gravel, some fell among thorns and some on good soil. Perfect! I know right where to pray; among the thorns, stones and hardness of my life. Jesus might be saying something about Himself as a good-seed thrower or me as good soil, but I have not the time for that. I have to spend my prayer graveling and unthorning myself so that, by my efforts and hard-work prayer, just some day, I will create my own good soil. I am in the second self-centered group who does not listen, but gets down to business about self-perfection.

Are you still listening?!? I know it is very good to be aware and caring for ourselves. God is even more so and desires to complete what Love has begun. Real changes, deep changes, are the result of our being met in our truth by others. The relationships change us, more than our examining, our picking on ourselves, and our self-defining and convicting. Jesus came and continues to come, more to meet us and tell us about Himself than to point fingers with a frown. It is only a glimpse and keep listening and giving Him time.