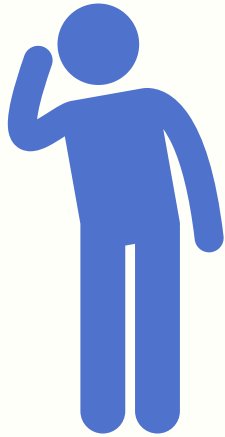


# TELL ME MORE

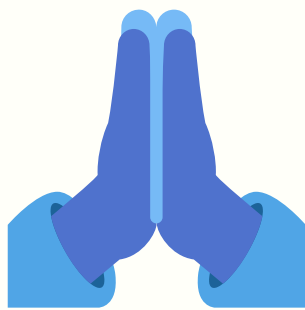
FOUR PRACTICES TO EXPAND OUR CAPACITY TO  
COMPASSIONATELY LISTEN



Listening with  
Awareness



Listening with  
Patience



Listening with Humility



Listening with  
Compassion



Bryn Athyn Church

# WELCOME

## GETTING STARTED

“I have heard angels discover a person's life simply by listening.”  
(*Heaven and Hell* 236.4)

“God works through your listening to accomplish healing.”  
(*Stephen Ministry Training Manual*, p. 40)

**Thank you for taking time to put extra focus on expanding the skill of listening.** We see listening as a spiritual practice essential to building community and supporting well-being and healing. We want to expand our ability as a community to be skilled listeners so that we can better serve our neighbor every day.

**When we listen to our neighbor we are loving our neighbor.** Our efforts matter. Our intentions matter. We are invited in scripture (as in many religious traditions) to love our neighbor. How do we do this? Jon Kabat Zinn, a well-known author and meditation teacher, says that “listening is a radical act of love.” When we listen we also get to know our neighbors better so we can serve them more fully.

**Listening to the Lord is a sacred practice.** Much of the focus in the Bible is on listening to the Lord. We are called time and again, “Those who have ears to hear--hear!” and “Watch/Pray” and “Awake”. Jesus tells His disciples that if they really want to love Him, then “feed My sheep.” (John 21:17) We can see this as a call to show our love for the Lord by showing up and caring for others. As Jesus said, “Love one another as I have loved you.” (John 13:34)

**Listening isn't always easy or comfortable.** Sometimes opportunities to listen arise when our focus is elsewhere, when someone is talking about something upsetting to us, when we disagree with their words, or their story brings up pain. We hope that the resources in this series will help you further develop your capacity to be present with your neighbor in all kinds of conversations.



Bryn Athyn Church

*Created by John Odhner, Bronwen Henry, Nina Dewees and Solomon Keal  
with input from Bryn Athyn Church Stephen Ministers.*

# RESOURCES

## GET CONNECTED

Contact Nina Dewees, Support and Engagement Coordinator ([nina.dewees@brynathynchurch.org](mailto:nina.dewees@brynathynchurch.org)) if you would like more information about any of these resources.



### Bryn Athyn Church

#### **Bryn Athyn Church Office**

There is a team of caring professionals ready and wanting to offer support.



**STEPHEN  
MINISTRY**

#### **Stephen Ministry | A Caring Ministry Accessible to All**

At Bryn Athyn Church we are grateful to have a team of Stephen Ministers, trained listeners, ready to support people going through challenging times.



#### **Pay-It-Forward Crew**

This is part of Bryn Athyn Church's effort to connect people in times of need with people who want to offer support in practical ways.

#### **BA Church Emergency Financial Aid Committee**

Short term financial assistance for those currently associated with Bryn Athyn Church.

#### **Caring for Marriage**

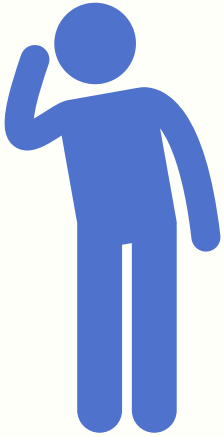
If you would like support in your marriage call Lori Odhner at 215-840-9279.

#### **Mobile Crisis Support | Montgomery County**

When you or a loved one are experiencing a crisis, Mobile Crisis is available to help. Just call (855) 634-HOPE (4673). The line is open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

# LISTENING WITH AWARENESS

## WEEK ONE



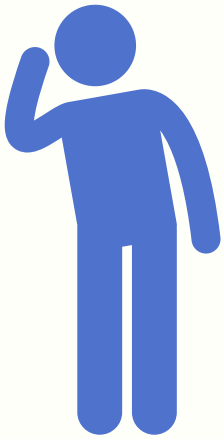
### Ice Breaker

Consider these forms of body language (in box below). Pick one or two to comment on what they might be communicating. Have you ever misinterpreted someone's body language?

crossed arms	fidgiting
leaning forward/	smiling
leaning back	pulling ear
furrowed brow	standing up straight
legs crossed	hunched over
nodding	looking down
shaking head	twisting hair
tilting head	rubbing eyes
twisting mouth	pinching bridge of nose
nail biting	hands on hips
tapping fingers	

# LISTENING WITH AWARENESS

## WEEK ONE



### **Overview**

This week we focus on noticing what is going on around us and within us when we have an opportunity to listen. We are challenged to remove distractions and put our focus on another person. We can display increased awareness through our eyes, face, hands and posture.

“Sit slightly forward. Maintain an open, relaxed posture. Look into the other person’s eyes. Pay strict attention to what the other person is saying so that you are able to reflect what the other person says.” (*Stephen Ministry Training Manual*, p. 51)

Be brave, reach out, accept the opportunity to show up for people by listening. People want to tell their stories. Consider how Pharaoh’s daughter took initiative in this scriptural story.

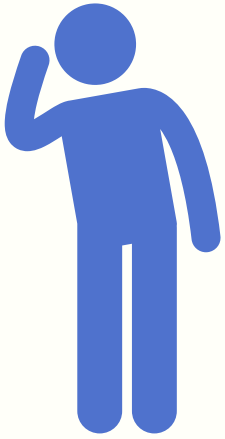
### **Scriptural Story**

Pharaoh’s Daughter was alerted to help. “Then Pharaoh’s daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. “This is one of the Hebrew babies,” she said. Then his sister asked Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?” “Yes, go,” she answered. So the girl went and got the baby’s mother.

Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you.” So the woman took the baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh’s daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, “I drew him out of the water.” (Exodus 2:5-10)

# LISTENING WITH AWARENESS

## WEEK ONE



### **Additional Quotes**

“Be quick to listen, slow to speak.”

(James 1:19)

“When people who are perceptive have feelings of compassion, they know that they are being alerted by the Lord to offer help.”

(*Secrets of Heaven* 6737)

“The hallmark of love is also being loved by others because this is how we are united. Truly, the essence of all love is to be found in union, in the life of love that we call joy, delight, pleasure, sweetness, blessedness, contentment and happiness. The essence of love is that what is ours should belong to someone else. Feeling the joy of someone else as joy within ourselves—that is loving. Feeling our joy in others, though, and not theirs in ourselves, is not loving.”

(*Divine Love and Wisdom* 47)

“Love begins with listening.” (Fred Rogers)

“Listening is about being present, not just about being quiet.”

(Krista Tippett)

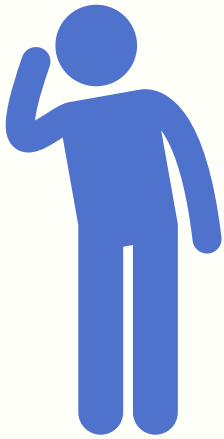
“When you have eyes to see your own given light you also have eyes to see others’ given light...and this sacred sight reveals that all have been given the same light.” (Scott Erikson)

“You cannot truly listen to anyone and do anything else at the same time.”

(M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled*)

# LISTENING WITH AWARENESS

## WEEK ONE



### Discussion Questions

What stands out to you in this story?

What is your response to these quotes?

Where/when do you struggle to listen with awareness?

Where/when does listening with awareness come easily?

Describe a time you felt alerted to help another? How did it go?

### Practice

Pair off. First read the Tips and Ideas below. Set a timer for two minutes each. Speak briefly to “What is on your mind/heart today?”

After you each have a turn, return to the whole group. Discuss, how did this go? What made it easy? What made it hard?

### Week One Challenge

**Neighbor:** Focus on someone else.

**God:** Listen to God through scripture, meditation, prayer or nature.

### Closing Comments/Intentions

#### Prayer

Dear God, Thank You for this gathering, for this chance to focus on what is meaningful in life. Help us to put aside our "to do" list, and to put aside any insecurity, doubt and fear. May we step into the blessing of community. May we step into awareness of our breath, our beating heart, and the presence of others. May we open our awareness to Your love filling our hearts, minds, lives, and this very space we are in. May we bring this loving awareness into our interactions with others. Amen.



### Tips and Ideas

Be curious.

Acknowledge what you are hearing. Example, “You sound really stressed.” (This gives a chance to clarify understanding.)

Show your interest and that you are listening through your body language, eye contact, and validating audible responses.

Be interested; ask questions.

Decide to listen. Make an inner commitment to show up.

Turn off your phone.

# LISTENING WITH PATIENCE

## WEEK TWO



### **Icebreaker**

Describe a time recently when you lost your patience? What contributed to you losing it?

or

What is a generous gift of someone else's time that you've received?

### **Overview**

This week we focus on expanding our capacity to stay present. We focus on accessing patience in the practice of listening. We are encouraged to ask questions such as "Is there more?" or prompt the speaker, "Tell me more." We might think of this as the time to bite our tongue, to stay seated, to stay curious. We may be able to access calmness more easily when we hold an eternal view, trusting God's leading in another person's life. We do not have to rush to solve anything.

Sometimes when we are listening we are eager to respond, to empathize, to share our experience, to offer an insight or inspiration. This week is about developing our ability to be still, keep the focus on the other person, and listen without an agenda forming.

"Many times, people in crisis already know exactly what they should do. What they need are patient, listening ears--people who can be completely present as they express their feelings. God works through such caregiving to inspire in people the courage to do what they know they must do." (*Stephen Ministry Training Manual* p. 41)



# LISTENING WITH PATIENCE

## WEEK TWO



### Scriptural Story

“As Jesus and His disciples were on their way, He came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to Him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what He said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to Him and asked, “Lord, don’t You care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:38-42)



### Tips and Ideas

Silence is okay. Sometimes a pause leaves room for more to open up.

Notice any uneasiness that comes up. Sit with that discomfort. Remember you are not looking to fix anything, you are listening.

Try to quiet what you want to say next.

Sometimes it is better to make statements than to ask questions. For example, “I’m interested to hear about your trip,” rather than “How was your trip?” Action: Wait (non-action). Ask “Is there more?” or “Tell me more.” Don’t interrupt.

Ask for clarification of a sentiment that is vague. For example, if they say “Let’s just say it didn’t go well,” you could respond “What does not going well look like to you?” Or, if they say “Well, you know how people are...” you might respond, “How are people?”

# LISTENING WITH PATIENCE

## WEEK TWO



### **Additional Quotes**

"Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10)

"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." (Psalm 27:14)

"You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways." (Psalm 139:2-3)

"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." (James 1:19)

"According to Swedenborg, humans are born with both a desire to seek love (meaning they want to be loved) and a capacity to love (that is to be able to love others besides and beyond oneself). Many human problems stem from the difference between our innate desire for love and our innate potential to give love. Seeking to be loved is a natural process for us, while loving others properly requires conscious acknowledgement, patience and inner cultivation."

(New Christian Bible Study, "The Gift of Love")

"Seek first to understand... then to be understood. Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply." (Stephen Covey, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*)

"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."  
(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

# LISTENING WITH PATIENCE

## WEEK TWO



### Discussion Questions

What is your response to the story of Martha and Mary?  
When have you felt more like Martha? More like Mary?

### Practice.

Pair up. Take five minutes each. Begin with a one sentence response to the request "Describe a time you felt upset." Then the listener asks "Tell me more." Repeat this to practice developing the "muscle" for being patient and inquiring further. When the timer goes off, thank your partner and switch turns sharing.

### Week Two Challenge

**Neighbor:** In conversations practice waiting to speak (non-action). Ask "Is there more?" or "Tell me more." Don't interrupt.

**God:** Create extra time to listen for God's response, keeping in mind His *eternal* plan for us.

### Closing Comments/Intentions

#### Prayer

Dear God, Thank You for this gathering, for this opportunity to walk alongside one another. Thank You for this chance to take a break from the busyness of life, to step into the stillness of Your presence and the experience of community. God, You know our shortcomings and You love us anyway. You know our heartbreak and immediately bring comfort when we turn to You. God, we are aware of our impatience, our eagerness to fix things, and we ask for Your help. Help us to slow down and breathe. Help us to trust in the ways You are working in the lives of others. Help us to lean into a confidence that all is well and all will be well. Amen.

# LISTENING WITH HUMILITY

## WEEK THREE

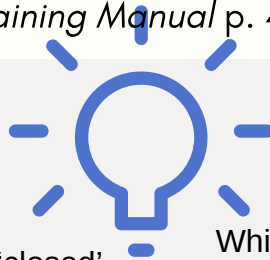
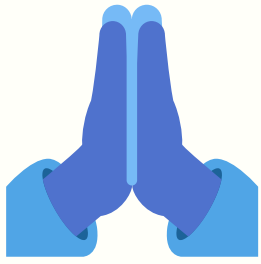
### Icebreaker

Describe a time someone made you feel seen, heard and/or known.

### Overview

This week we are invited to empty our own thoughts, let go of judgment, release control and open our minds to feedback. Listen to another believing that they have something of value to tell you that you don't already know. This kind of listening invites us to access a humility that acknowledges we don't have all the answers.

"Jesus continually demonstrated the relationships between caring and listening. Before Jesus healed the daughter of a Canaanite woman, He let her give testimony of faith (Matt 15:21-28). Before Jesus healed the blind man (Mark 10:46-52), Jesus asked what he wanted and carefully listened to the man's reply. Jesus could have spoken without first taking the time to let them speak. Instead, He showed care and concern by listening and then ministering to their needs. Certainly Jesus presents a good example of listening. Even with His insight into people's problems, indeed because of His insight, Jesus listened to people before acting or responding. It is important that you, too, listen before you respond."  
(*Stephen Ministry Training Manual* p. 40)



### Tips and Ideas

Consider the difference between a 'closed' question and an 'open' question. Example: instead of "Do you feel angry?" try "How are you feeling?" Instead of "Was school hard?" try "How was school?"

Explore alternatives to "Why...." and try instead "What led to that..?" or "How did you find that?" Sometimes "why" can feel accusatory.

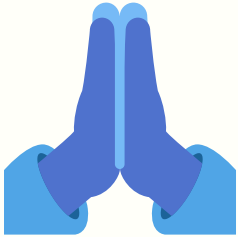
While expressing empathy can be valuable, avoid claiming "I know just how you feel."

If you are feeling defensive, ask questions. "Can you help me understand what you meant by..?"

When listening to feedback from someone, practice stepping into the mindset of thinking or saying, "I am appreciating the potential value of this feedback."

# LISTENING WITH HUMILITY

## WEEK THREE



### **Scriptural Story | Solomon's Listening Heart**

"The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, 'Ask! What shall I give you?' And Solomon said: 'You have shown great mercy to Your servant David, my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

Now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?'

The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. Then God said to him: 'Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you.

And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days. So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.' Then Solomon awoke; and indeed it had been a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, offered up burnt offerings, offered peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants." (1 Kings 3:5-15)

# LISTENING WITH HUMILITY

## WEEK THREE



### **Additional Quotes**

"A heart that is haughty is not at all receptive, only one that is humble"  
(*Secrets of Heaven* 2715:2)

"Those who are guided by kindness hardly even notice evil in another, but pay attention instead to everything good and true in the person. When they do find anything bad or false, they put a good interpretation on it. This is a characteristic of all angels one they acquire from the Lord, who bends everything bad toward good." (*Secrets of Heaven* 1079)

"Live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble." (1 Peter 3:8)

"Where does it hurt?" That's a question the civil rights legend Ruby Sales learned to ask during the days of that movement — a question she found to have a power to drive to the heart of the matter." (Krista Tippett)

"The more deeply you understand other people, the more you will appreciate them, the more reverent you will feel about them. To touch the soul of another human being is to walk on holy ground."  
(Stephen Covey)

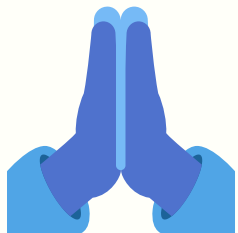
### **Discussion Questions**

What is your response to this story of Solomon and what he asked for?  
What do you think you'd ask for today?

If there is a person in your life that you struggle to pay attention to the goodness in them, how might you shift that?

# LISTENING WITH HUMILITY

## WEEK THREE



### Practice

Pair up. Choose one of these scenarios below (or use a real example from your life, if you prefer) and practice listening with humility. With a partner, take turns in each role. Set a timer for 2 to 3 minutes each.

#### **Scenario #1** (When you want to give advice.)

A friend shares with you that she is quitting her job. This is even after she recently told you about her financial troubles. See if you can resist judging and be a supportive presence while you learn more about this decision.

#### **Scenario #2** (When you want to give advice.)

While out to coffee with your nephew, he mentions he is dropping out of school to focus on his passion for music. You know his parents are upset about this. See if you can be a compassionate presence as you learn more about this decision.

#### **Scenario #3** (When you are receiving feedback)

A friend pulls you aside to let you know that something you said has hurt them. This wasn't your intention. See if you can better understand their experience, rather than defending your words.

### Week Three Challenge

**Neighbor:** Avoid giving advice. Treat others as important. See what you can learn from them. Practice saying, "Thanks for the feedback."

**God:** Listen for ways that the Lord may be providing an opportunity for growth through your relationships and life experiences.

### Closing Comments/Intentions

#### Prayer

Dear God, Thank You for this time to lift up our thoughts and intentions to Your love. May we loosen our grip on rightness and step into curiosity with humility. May we remember the ways You are working that are beyond our understanding. Help us to feel a sense of peace and ease that You are in charge. Amen.

# LISTENING WITH COMPASSION

## WEEK FOUR



### **Icebreaker**

Describe a time when you felt unexpected compassion for someone.

### **Overview**

This week we focus on bringing the Lord into the conversation. Invite the Lord's love to help you be present with what is happening. Remember this person is God's child and God is working in their lives. Listen deeply to what is said and unsaid. Expressing experiences, thoughts and feelings can have a very positive value for a person. "Good listening involves paying attention to body language, piecing together fragments of multiple conversations, and even noticing what the person does not say." (*Stephen Ministry Training Manual* p. 43)

### **Scriptural Story**

Hagar and an Angelic Inquiry

"Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba. When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, 'I cannot watch the boy die.' And as she sat there, she began to sob. God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, 'What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.'

Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt." (Genesis 21:14-21)



# LISTENING WITH COMPASSION

## WEEK FOUR



### Additional Quotes

"I love the Lord, for He heard my voice; He heard my cry for mercy. Because He turned His ear to me, I will call on Him as long as I live. (Psalm 116:1-2)

"One reads in various places in the Word of people being questioned about their state, but the reason why they are questioned is this: People have no other belief than that no one knows their thoughts, let alone the state of their affection. An added reason is that people may be helped by being able to express their feelings, which usually does them good." (*Secrets of Heaven* 2693) (emphasis added)

"When angels hear [someone speaking] they perceive in it all that person's feelings, and can list and describe each one. We too can sense to some extent that there are qualities that lie within a voice when we listen to people talking to us. We can tell if there is contempt, ridicule or hatred, or else goodwill, benevolence, cheerfulness, or other feelings behind what they say." (*True Christianity* 365)

"God shows mercy to everyone, loves everyone, and wants to make everyone happy forever." (*Secrets of Heaven* 904.2)

"The deeper the sorrow, the less tongue it has." (The Talmud)

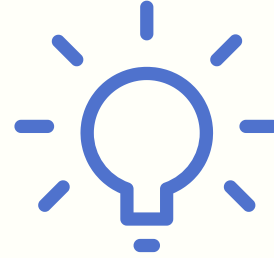
"The whole purpose of religion is to facilitate love and compassion, patience, tolerance, humility, forgiveness." (H.H. the Dalai Lama)

"If we can share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can't survive." (Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly*)

"Deep listening is the kind of listening that can help relieve the suffering of another person. You can call it compassionate listening. You listen with only one purpose: to help one to empty their heart." 16 (Thich Nhat Hanh)

# LISTENING WITH COMPASSION

## WEEK FOUR



### Tips and Ideas

If something confidential or tender has been shared, assure the person that you will not pass on this information nor bring it up in their presence without their permission.

What to say when you don't know what to say? Acknowledge your discomfort, and communicate your desire to be present with them. When you don't know what to say, it may be a good time for silence. Your presence may be all that is needed.

Stay with the heart of what people are saying and don't get distracted by the details. Put aside the journalist part of you. See if you can listen more deeply than the information.

Slow down and hear what they are really communicating.

Focus on the person, not the problem.



One time that is appropriate to break confidentiality is if a person is a danger to themselves or another. This is a situation to find help from a pastor or counselor, or call 911.

# LISTENING WITH COMPASSION

## WEEK FOUR



### Discussion Questions

What is your response to the story of Hagar and the angel?  
Do any of the quotes stand out to you? Why?

### Practice

Role play. Use the scenarios below (or use a real-life example if you prefer). Practice being the person who is navigating a life challenge (in each scenario) while the other person listens. If you are the listener, ask yourself: "Is this person's nonverbal behavior consistent with the verbal statements he or she is making?" Reflect back what you are observing. After two-three minutes of practice, switch.

#### Scenario #1

Speaker: You just got bad news that you didn't get a job you applied for. You keep saying how it is no problem, that it wasn't meant to be. That everything will be fine. You are trying to talk yourself into this, though deep down you are upset and it shows in your voice and body language. Listener: See if you can connect/reflect the disconnect between the words and the energy/body language.

#### Scenario #2

Speaker: You just got a tough diagnosis. You are really stressed about treatment options. You spiral back and forth between the choices. Listener: Resist getting opinionated about the treatment options. See if you can reflect back the stress of the situation. (This is a chance to resist problem solving.)

#### Scenario #3

Speaker: Practice sharing a neutral statement, but with different body language (see icebreaker from week 1 for ideas). Try saying "I am going on vacation with my family" (or pick your own). Listener: See if you can listen deeper than the words and observe body language. What does the speaker appear to be communicating? 18

# LISTENING WITH COMPASSION

## WEEK FOUR



### Week Four Challenge

**Neighbor:** Listen for FEELINGS; all thoughts contain feelings. Reflect back the feelings you think they are expressing. Name them, and check - "Did I get that right?".

**God:** Bring your feelings to the Lord; He will listen to them. Open your heart to His compassion and let that become part of your compassionate listening.

### Closing Comments/Intentions

You may want to discuss with your group if you'd like to continue meeting or touch base again after this last meeting.

### Prayer

Dear God, Thank You for this opportunity to travel life together with others. Thank You for the ability to see, hear and feel deeply as we walk with one another through the highs and lows. You know the ways we get distracted, the ways we shut down, and the ways we are afraid. Yet still Your love and wisdom gently lead us in a more loving, present, and courageous path. May we open to Your deep compassion, may we find the courage to show up for each other in hard times. May we remember that we don't have to have the wisdom to know what is best - we can lean on *Your* wisdom and guidance. We don't need to be a source of love, but simply open to *Your* love flowing through us. Amen.