



WAY OF LIFE | PRACTICE TOOLKIT

LISTENING LISTENING GROUPS

INTRODUCTION

This is a shortened version of the Listening Groups practice. A full introduction and further handouts can be found on listening.wayoflife.london

◆ Background

Listening groups are a tool to help us share with others our experience of God in the midst of our lives. As we listen to each other prayerfully, we create space to grow and deepen our faith together. This has the potential to strengthen us in our relationship with God, ourselves and others.

◆ Summary of the practice

After an opening prayer and time of reflection, we take turns to share; to talk about our recent experience of faith and to listen to each other in small groups of three to four people.

A listening group is not the same as a discussion group. The aim is not to fix each other's problems or to give advice, but to sit with our questions and trust that God is with us in this process.

We are creating an atmosphere of prayerful listening, and we are recognising that great wisdom and learning may come from another in the group. By committing to meet in listening groups, we seek to strengthen our relationships as we:

- Encourage one another in paying attention to what God is doing in our lives;

- Develop the skills and habits of listening and sharing;
- Learn wisdom from one another's experiences.

◆ Ways to use the practice

Listening Groups could be run jointly or as part of another meeting, when several groups come together for a shared opening prayer and time of reflection, before going into smaller groups of 3-4 people for a time of sharing. They can also be run individually, with group members organising their own pattern of meeting up.

To begin with, the focus of the practice is primarily on silence and listening. As the group continues to journey together, more time for responses and reflections by group members can be built into the practice.

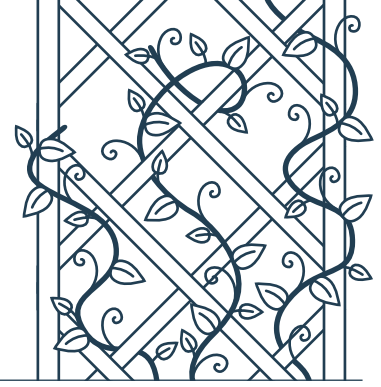
◆ Time

Depending on group size, a listening group session would usually take around an hour. The group might decide to add some time to pray for each other at the end. Sessions would take place every three to six weeks, either in person or online.



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OUTLINE | BEGINNER

| For groups that are coming together for the first few times.

| You will need: a candle, a lighter and a copy of this outline for all participants.

1 Introduction (5 min)

Before you start this session, take time to introduce yourselves to each other. Appoint someone to facilitate the session and lead the group through this outline. This can be a different person each time.

2 Preparation (5 min)

Share anything that is on your mind right now which might prevent you from being fully present. These might be questions around the process or anything going on in your life that you would like to park for a while.

3 Opening Prayer (1 min)

The facilitator will light a candle. Stay in silence for a moment. Then pray together: **Creator God, as we spend time together in your presence: may we meet you in the world around us, in one another, and in our own hearts. Amen.**

4 Reflection (5-10 min)

The facilitator will lead a short time of reflection to help the group take on a posture of silence and attentiveness. This could be a simple moment of silence, or you can use a reading from Scripture, poem, inspiring quote, image, icon, video, piece of music, etc.

5 Sharing Time (20-30 min)

Choose one person to read each of the 'wonderings' below. Take turns reflecting on one 'wondering' of your choice for three

to four minutes each. Hold half a minute of silence between each person's sharing. The person sharing should not be interrupted. When someone finishes sharing, without commenting, hold a moment of silence before the next person speaks.

Wonderings

- I wonder how Christ has been present for you in the past week.
- I wonder if Christ has also been present in your struggles.
- I wonder what has helped you to listen to God and what have been distractions.
- I wonder what help you seek from God at this point in your life.

6 Review (5-10 min)

After everyone has shared, use the following questions to reflect on the experience together:

- What was it like to share something without being interrupted?
- What did it feel like being listened to?
- Were there any distractions that made it difficult to keep listening to others?
- If you have held a Listening Group before, was the experience any different from last time?

7 Closing Prayer (1 min)

Pray the following words together before blowing out the candle:

May the light of Christ shine in our hearts, our lives, in our ministries and in our world with wisdom, compassion and peace. Amen.