

## The Mary Model as a Listening Model

Greetings One and All,

The question has come up about the difference between a listening ministry and counseling. I am looking for questions like this. Pastoral Care Providers and Befrienders are listeners and not counselors.

We can Dialogue (Scripture story, another's story, our story) with the Gospel for this coming Sunday. (Luke 10: 37-42) Did Mary listen to Jesus or did she counsel Jesus? The Greek provides a very clear answer. The verb form for the word listen means "continual listening." (Rienecker and Rogers, page 172) The English translation does not have the same impact as the Greek. Mary engages in a listening ministry and Jesus later affirms her, "Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:42)

As Jesus was talking he was also observing. Perhaps he becomes the counselor when he answers Martha who objects when Mary is not helping. Jesus finds Martha distracted by many things. He doesn't object to her doing but what is communicated in the way she goes about doing. We can conclude that Martha needs the counselor.

What was Jesus talking about that allows him to conclude that Mary as a listener has the better part. I would like to know what you hear that is not printed. This is a place to be imaginative, based on previous Scripture.

Mary becomes our model for listening. Our task is to stay with the story as a continuous listener. We live in a problem solving and solution oriented culture. We think we have to help or do something. To do nothing but listen leaves us feeling guilty and inadequate. Jesus absolves our guilt. "Mary has chosen the better part ... ." With practice we all can discover the wisdom of this approach.

A listening model is very paradoxical, contradictory, and brings opposites together. We help by not helping. We have a more nonlinear, non-problem solving, non solution oriented, non pragmatic, non-counseling model since initial help comes by way of presence, being, and listening rather than doing/goal setting/objectives. Story listeners put the breaks on providing a quick solution. They serve as a mirror of understanding. The person telling the story often sees more clearly where he/she is as they tell their story.

listening and counseling are both therapeutic. Both can generate healing. In this sense there is a place where they overlap for a brief moment. Both employ the discipline of listening with a different direction and orientation. Our listening model has various titles. Each title adds an important aspect: Lament Model, Psalm Listening, Poetic Listening, the Mary Model, Descent/Ascent Model, The Wounded Healer Model, The Comic Model, and The Transformation Model. The titles refer to one kind of narrative model in Scripture. (Biliman and Migliore, 1999, p. 23).

To be continued,  
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Rienecker, Fritz, and Rogers, Cleon; Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament; The Regency Reference Library, 1976, 864 pages

Biliman, Kathleen, and Migliore, Daniel; Rachel's cry: Prayer of lament and rebirth of hope; United Church Press, 1999, 171 pages.