

Lent Reflection: Listen to Him



The aim of this resource is to focus attention on the Lenten Scripture: The Transfiguration (Mt17:1-5). The resource supports *The Year of the Word; The God Who Speaks* and is designed to be used during an assembly or within a school liturgy, with or without slides.

Today we're going to be thinking about the importance of listening. Let's start with a question. Hands up if you are listening now. That's not the question, but it did reveal an answer. This is the question: when we **really listen** to someone, how much of what they communicate do we receive through our ears?

*Note for leader: When providing the multiple choice, place emphasis on **the correct answer (in red)**.*

Question 1: Hands up if you think we hear **a) 25%** of what is communicated **b) 35%** **c) 65%**

Various scientific studies over the years have revealed that when listening to someone, we take in more information from what we see than the words a person uses. This reveals that really listening is about more than hearing words, it's also about reflecting on what those words mean by being attentive to the **way** they are said, the **actions** that accompany them, and the **sensations** felt by the speaker and the listener. For example, someone might say they are fine but their shaky voice, the tears in their eyes and the sadness we feel for them tell us otherwise.

The Gospel we hear on the second Sunday of Lent teaches us something about the importance of listening. Let's go through the reading together, considering what the Scripture might be saying to us personally. We'll start with just a couple of sentences.

Read the first paragraph from page 3 or click on the PowerPoint to reveal first paragraph of Scripture.

Question 2: Although there are only a few words here, they say a lot about how to listen well. What lessons do you think can we learn?

Did any of you wonder why Jesus took his disciples up a remote mountain? In the Bible mountains symbolise closeness to God who dwells in the heavens, so this is the obvious answer. But maybe Jesus also led his disciples there because he wanted them to have few distractions, so they could listen better.

How upsetting is it when we are trying to share something important with someone, but we know they're not listening; maybe they're on their phone or distracted by what's going on around them. Maybe Jesus just needed his friends' full attention, as our loved ones on occasion need ours.

Some of you will have pondered over Jesus's transfiguration. Transfiguration means the appearance of someone or something changes and appears magnificent or glorified. But what has this to do with listening?

Has anyone heard the expression "seen in a different light"? Can anyone explain what it means? An example could be, 'I thought the person was really dull, until we worked together, and I saw them in a different light.'

In the weeks before Jesus led Peter, James and John up this mountain, he had been gradually revealing his identity as the Son of God to the disciples. But despite his miracles and healings they had struggled to see.

This was because they'd been looking at Jesus from their own viewpoint, overshadowed by **their** ideas and presumptions. This prevented them from seeing Jesus as he really was.

Jesus's transfiguration allowed the disciples to see him, literally, in a different light. God offered the disciples a new way of seeing and, consequentially, a new way of listening. Let's find out how in the next paragraph.

[Read the second paragraph from page 3 or click on the PowerPoint to reveal this paragraph of Scripture.](#)

Question 3: What can we learn from Peter about what **not to do** in order to listen well?

A key indicator that someone is really listening to us is that they don't interrupt and talk about what they think should be done. In fact, when someone is listening, they don't talk much at all! In the reading Peter interrupts. But he didn't mean to be rude, after all he's surrounded by his heroes, the prophet Moses to whom God gave the ten commandments, and the prophet Elijah, who brought many people back to God.

Peter's error is that he didn't stop to consider that he might be thinking of what **he wanted to do**, rather than what God **wanted him to do**, which was to stop talking, be still, and just listen to Jesus.

God wanted the disciples and all of us to know that by listening Jesus's word and following his example, we can learn to put our wants aside and learn to really listen – with our ears, eyes, heart and mind. That's how we show our respect, concern and love for God and others. In turn this listening and loving changes and transfigures us. We become magnificent too, as God's light shines out from inside our soul, brightening up the lives of others.

A good example of this is 17-year-old Antoine. [Click to reveal image of Antoine.](#)

Antoine attends a college in Bethlehem, where he is considering becoming a priest. To discern his vocation Antoine knows he must listen to God's voice in Scripture, in the people he meets, and through his experiences. Over time Antoine has learned to listen well, with one experience providing particularly helpful.

Antoine is a member of a youth group called the Young Christian Workers. This group helps young people to show God's love and mercy in the world. A couple of years ago Antoine volunteered with the group to prepare and serve food to refugees at a Syrian and Iraqi refugee camp.

Before his work in the camp Antoine's view of refugees was based on preconceptions and opinions he'd heard from others. He thought he knew what to expect. But as he explained in an interview with the charity Missio he was surprised by what he discovered. He said, "I saw situations worse than mine at the camp, but on the other hand the refugees were happier than me! They never complained, nagged or asked for more."

By listening to the refugees Antoine began to see things in a different light. Through his service at the camp, through his prayers, and by reflecting on God's word he recognised everyone's identity as children of God; all members of God's human family. Now he says with confidence that "Being accepted is a great thing."

Antoine continues to listen to God's voice in Scripture and in the experiences he encounters. He wants to work with the poor, to live among them and help in what way he can. We can do the same.

Let's consider the following ways we can change ourselves and others by listening well this Lent.

- Sometimes we also fail to recognise people fully. We might sit in their company often, but not really notice who they are. Aim to notice people, look for opportunities to talk and listen to others.
- When we learn to listen to God through His word and in our prayer, it becomes easier to listen to people as well. This Lent read passages from the Gospels and reflect on how Jesus listens to people.
- Lent is a time to listen to the needs of others and support them through prayer and by offering what you can. Giving to Missio enables you, like Antoine, to share God's love in places of poverty and conflict.

Conclude with prayer for The Year of the Word (see page 3) or [click to reveal prayer](#)

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew 17:1-5

Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as dazzling as light.

Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they were talking with him. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. 'Lord,' he said, 'it is wonderful for us to be here; if you want me to, I will make three shelters here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.'

He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud covered them with shadow, and suddenly from the cloud there came a voice which said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him.'

The Gospel of the Lord



Official Prayer for The Year of the Word

Living God, you walk alongside us and speak to us throughout the Scriptures.
Your Son, Jesus Christ, listens to our hopes and fears
and shows us how to live for one another.
Send us the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds
so that we may be your witnesses throughout the world.
Amen.