



GROWING LEADERS
SESSION 3
CLARIFYING
CALL

Introduction

Session 3: Clarifying call helps participants to explore God's call on their lives. When we talk about call on GL we don't simply mean what they are called to in the area of their work, but rather how the call to be a disciple of Jesus Christ in every aspect of their life gets worked out in their daily decisions.

Some Christians think that call is only for the super-spiritual ones, so through an exercise at the start of the session we seek to help them understand that God calls all Christians to discipleship (primary vocation), and that each person has some specific aspects of this call that are unique to them (secondary vocation).

As part of this session we've asked them to do a project on developing a personal life statement. Do ask them about this, and as they put it together over the coming months you may well be able to offer some insight and encouragement for them in the process.

We've suggested the following questions may be helpful to explore with their mentor:

- How do you feel about God having a purpose for your life?
- What do you think God is calling you to? What is the hardest/easiest aspect of that call?
- What is the best way for you to further discern God's call?
- How are you getting on with your personal life statement?

Active Listening

Active listening – giving attention – is probably one of the most important aspects of the role of the mentor. By engaging in active listening, the mentor will be creating a supportive environment in which to work with the mentee.

Active listening is about hearing and understanding what another person is saying, both at the level of the words spoken and of the feelings/emotions conveyed.

So here is a reminder of some of the keys to effective listening.



'WHOEVER TALKS
MOST LISTENS
LEAST.'

Guidelines for Effective Listening

ENVIRONMENT

- Arrange the seating without barriers, as far as possible. Try to remove or push aside any desks and tables that can be seen as a barrier or symbol of power and to have chairs of equal height to enable eye contact, creating a feeling of equality.
- Adjust the space between the chairs to be close enough to work well together, but not so close as to threaten or intimidate the mentee. Arranging the chairs at an angle may also be less threatening than face-to-face.
- Ensure the environment is comfortable, clear of distractions and clutter and at the right temperature.

ATTENTION

Give your full attention physically and psychologically.

- Physically face your mentee.
- Maintain eye contact for about 75% of the time. Don't stare, as this can be threatening.
- Maintain an open posture – try to avoid crossing your arms and legs.
- Stay relatively relaxed.

Listen to what is being said:

- Listen for themes as well as facts.
- Keep an open mind.
- Analyse and evaluate.
- Don't interrupt.

Listen to how it is being said:

- Notice tone of voice.
- Evaluate non-verbal signals.

Listen for what is not being said:

- Ask the right questions to ensure you hear the full story.
- Look for signs of discrepancy between what is being said verbally and physically.
- Listen with your intuition.

APPROACH

- Give encouragement, verbal and non-verbal.
- Use silence positively.
- Give space for people to express themselves – don't jump in to every gap.
- Practise the key skills (overleaf).
- Learn to be comfortable when emotion is expressed.
- Be aware of your own feelings, prejudices and 'push-buttons'.
- Be as non-judgmental as you can.
- Seek to convey respect, empathy and genuineness.
- Pause before speaking to check that what you are about to say is really helpful.

Key Skills of Active Listening

OBSERVING

This involves careful, non-evaluative attention and eye contact, noticing both words and the emotional 'music'



'...when there is a discrepancy between verbal and non-verbal signals, pay more attention to the latter.'

ZEUS AND SKIFFINGTON

conveyed by body language and tone of voice – ‘reading’ the other person.

REFLECTING

These techniques increase clarity and help the speaker to know you’re hearing accurately. They express to the mentee that you are attempting to understand their world as they are experiencing it, by using their frame of reference. Reflecting can be done by:

- **Repeating back** some of the actual words the mentee has spoken, as though you are holding a mirror up.
- **Paraphrasing** – reflecting back the gist of what has been said, in your own words.
- **Reflecting feelings** – reflecting the feelings you are picking up from the speaker, either verbally (‘you sound angry about that’) or non-verbally (by mirroring body language). This can be especially helpful if the words and the emotions coming from the mentee don’t seem to match.

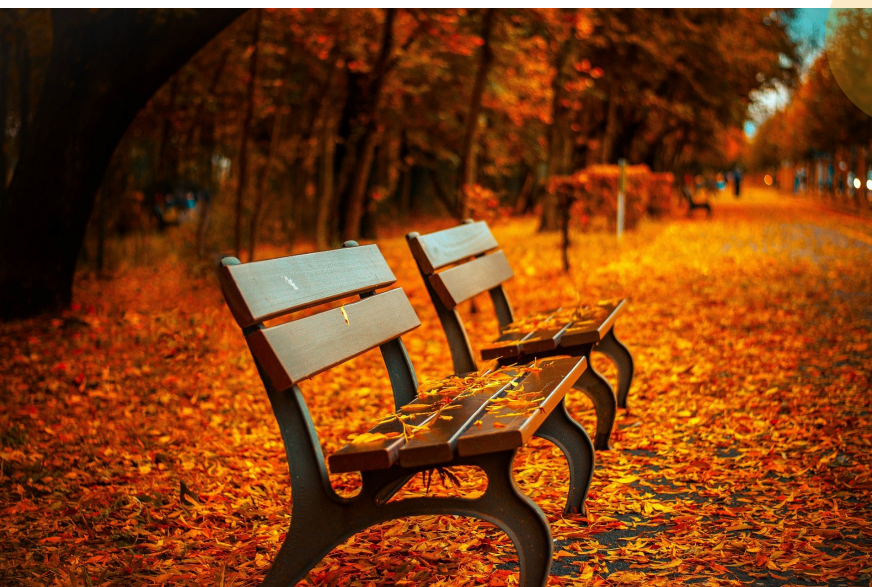
Done skilfully, these techniques can increase the mentee’s insight and help them to become confident with your sensitivity, so that more personal disclosure is likely to occur.

SUMMARISING

When you feel you are grasping the ideas, themes and so on coming from your mentee, summarising (recounting the key points) helps both to review and to check clarity and mutual understanding of what is being said. (‘So you’re saying ...’)

INTERPRETING

This may sometimes be appropriate, but beware of negative reactions from the speaker who may feel that you are deliberately distorting or reading more into the message than intended, for reasons of, or because of prejudices of, your own (are you?).



NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

At all times the mentor needs to be aware of non-verbal communication. This activity takes place on an unconscious level.

Good non-verbal communication is paramount in building positive relationships. Listening attentively should involve the mentor being aware of their own body language and that of the mentee. The mentor should avoid giving negative messages, or messages that might create a barrier, when communicating.

So we aim to listen more than we speak, ask questions more than offer solutions. Sometimes offering advice or ideas is appropriate... but don’t rush into it. Give people the chance to find their own ideas first – ask them what they have already thought about in relation to this issue, what they have tried already.

Then ask them again ‘What else do you think about this?’ In the presence of these kinds of questions, people think more clearly and more intelligently. Give them time and encouragement to trust their own ideas. They will thank you for it (even though you may go away feeling you didn’t do anything!)

A Skill to Learn

Forgive us if this update feels a little simplistic, but our experience is that listening sounds so easy, but in reality is quite hard. We find it helpful to be reminded of some of these basic skills, and to be encouraged to check that we aren’t talking too much.

The good news is that we can all get better at it. Practicing these skills within your mentoring sessions will help you to listen well to your mentee. And that will be one of the most powerful gifts you can offer them.

Growing Leaders
www.cpas.org.uk
admin@cpas.org.uk
0300 123 0780