

HEAR

Many times, the trouble we face in the ministry can be cured by simply listening to people.

Many of our ministry troubles can be helped or eliminated by just listening. Many people think no one cares about their trouble or that the leader cares only for a select few.

If a person seems to be on the attack or just distant from you, try to create an environment in which two things happen: he does the talking and you do the listening. If you can accomplish these two things, many troubles will cure themselves. There are scorners and critics, but there are hurting people about whom few, if anyone, care. As the pastor, if you will just stop long enough to hear what they have to say, you may give them all they need.

Their trouble or complaint may cover a variety of subjects; they may not even express their frustration clearly, but if you listen, look at them, keep your mind from wandering, and express concern and love, you will win their confidence and be able to help them.



Pictured here are two former FBC teens, who are now married and in the ministry. These two and their spouses are both living in eastern states: the distance has no bearing on the fact they would have their pastor's attention if they needed it.

In the picture on the right, a group of young people and I were out shooting fireworks during Youth Conference in Indiana (an incredible activity for California kids). This is a great time to listen, and to pay attention to their concerns about dating, home, or the future.



The same principle is true with our children. It is more complex, but the basics are the same. We are so busy, especially when we work in a fast-growing ministry or we have to work a secular job and pastor a church. Somehow a busy pastor can feel as if everyone should understand that he is working his heart out and family or church members need to help out by paying the price as well. Well, the people do not understand. He picked two jobs — they did not. She chose to be his wife and they are his children — that is all — and they want time with him. He may have to put in the long hours, but he had better learn to stop and listen.

That “stop and listen” approach applies to youth groups, families in the church, senior citizens, everyone.



These teens do not go to our church, but they do attend our summer camp. (They are a pastor's sons.) They stopped me as we walked down a sidewalk; we cut up some and took a picture. They knew Brother Goddard had time for them.