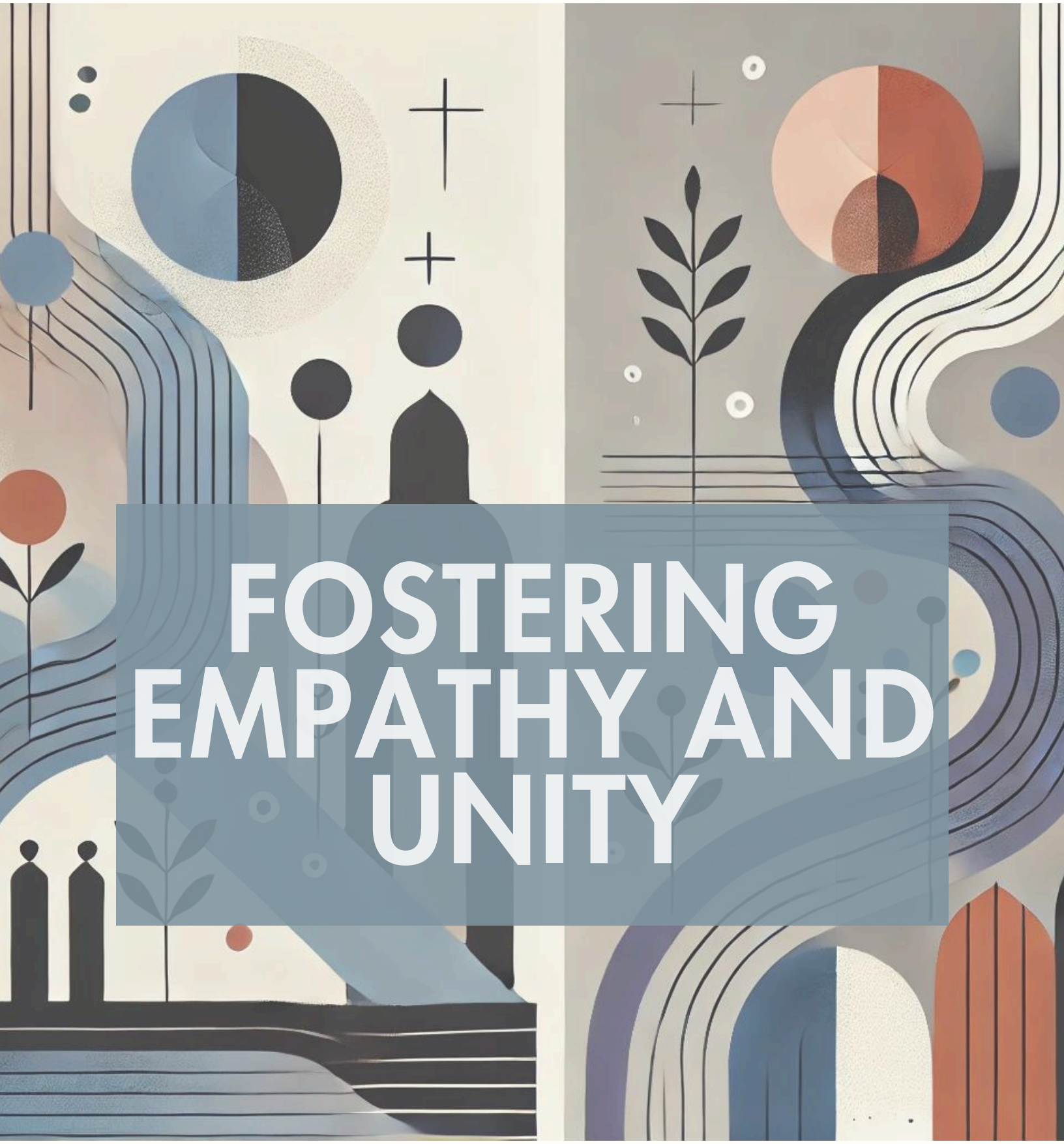
FUTURE OF FAITH

Sacred Tools for Courageous Connection



FOSTERING EMPATHY AND UNITY

AN ACTIVITY TO TAKE CARE OF ONE ANOTHER IN A DIVISIVE TIME

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LISTENING IS SACRED

Listening to each other is a sacred act. Listening to others' stories is an encounter with the divine because we are all made in God's image.

It emphasizes the interconnectedness of all people and the importance of fostering an environment where all voices are valued and heard.

Deep listening can have a profound impact on others' personal development, emotional well-being, communication skills, and overall sense of empowerment. It also transforms the listener.

Listening is more than hearing. It is not a call to respond but to embrace silence and sit with others' experiences. When you're truly listening, you are a conduit to the sacredness of the other person.

Sacred listening is a way to create connection through empathy, thoughtfulness, intention, and action. It can be infused into faith programs, community initiatives, family time and everyday interactions to provide each other with vital skills and emotional tools, equipping us all for a well-rounded life.

We aim to help you and others in your world to experience a sense of the divine, reinforcing the belief that in each act of genuine listening and understanding, we encounter God's presence in each other.

YOUR GUIDE



MEGAN BISSELL

Sociologist and Researcher

I built these tools as a guide for you to listen to the people in your life with intention and compassion. I based the activities on my experiences as a sociologist, a researcher, a research consultant, and as a parent of young people. One of the most valuable things we can do for young people is to get out of the way, making space for their voices, while also being present and hearing what they say. Listen with wonder, curiosity, and empathy.



INTRODUCTION TO SACRED LISTENING

INTRODUCTION TO SACRED LISTENING

In the heart of every person is a story—a constellation of experiences, beliefs, and dreams uniquely their own. As guides and champions of their spiritual and emotional development, you are called to embrace each person with deep reverence and careful attentiveness. This workbook is a guide to honing the art of Sacred Listening, a pivotal skill in nurturing your connection to the people you support in their own faith journey. In an era where conventional pathways to belief are uncertain or untrusted, listening is the most important thing you can do for someone.

Sacred Listening Theory

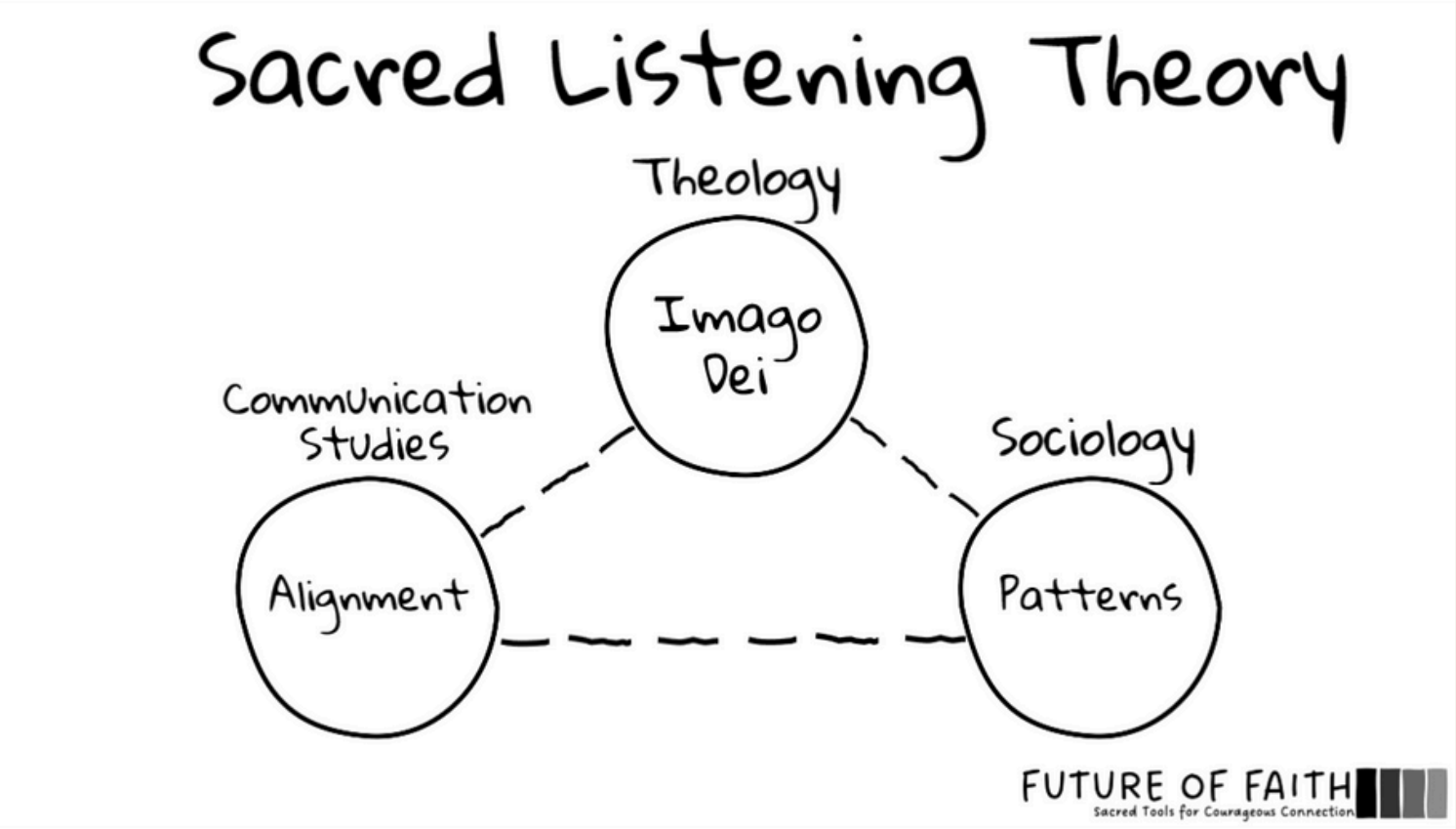
Sacred Listening is both a theory and a process. The three-part theory integrates principles from Theology, Communication Studies, and Sociology. Theology helps us find and embrace the sacredness of every person, which sets the tone for every interaction (Imago Dei). Communication Studies centers the importance of genuine engagement (Alignment) in ways that respect the context of the sacred person we're interacting with. Sociology guides the insightful analysis of information we learn from others (Patterns) and gives us ways to use what we learn to connect deeply, follow up and scale relationships beyond ourselves. In short, Sacred Listening is listening to each other in divine encounter, systematically.

Sacred Listening Process

The Sacred Listening process is easy to use, replicable in any setting, and helps scale relationships. It translates to any context and embodies a framework that can be practiced in large settings, small groups, or individual interactions. The process is directly connected to the theory. The first phase (Intentions) of the process is to center everyone by creating a sacred space through ritual and intention setting. The second phase (Ask and Record) aligns everyone through inquiry, sharing, and capturing information, which is carefully tuned to the diverse methods by which people express their lived experiences. The third phase (Explore and Follow-up) requires thoughtfulness and planning to look for patterns in what people share and find ways to use those patterns to follow-up in the ways people need you most.

The diagram on the following page illustrates the theory with the process.

INTRODUCTION TO SACRED LISTENING



Why Sacred Listening Matters

Life moves fast. The ability to deeply connect with others, quickly, is more crucial than ever. Listening authentically can transform interactions, build trust, and create meaningful relationships. Sacred listening allows us to:

- Feel and foster sacred moments with people in everyday interactions.
- Ask meaningful questions and gather important information that leads to deeper connections.
- Recognize patterns in what people are experiencing so that you can respond to needs in a timely and relevant way.
- Scale relationships to build and strengthen your community.
- Form empathetic and open connections that help us receive new ideas, sparking wonder, curiosity, and joy about faith in a world where narratives about faith are often fear-driven and negative.
- Be transformed. When we listen deeply to each other, in divine encounter, we are all changed.

INTRODUCTION TO SACRED LISTENING

Scaling Relationships Through Sacred Listening

The future of faith is relationships. Our old, institutional methods of connection don't work anymore because people don't trust institutions. Building the future church will require an intimate, hyper-local approach, based on individual relationships. All of that is very clear from the mountains of data collected by national research organizations.

But this call to relational ministry poses a fundamental problem for those in ministry: How do we do relationships at scale? How do we reach hundreds of people and pay attention to their lives?

Sacred Listening Tools provide the framework to do relational ministry at scale. It is difficult to hold information from all your relationships in your head, especially when trying to connect with dozens or hundreds of people. These tools help you to gather and use information to make and share intentional connections, rather than just relying on your memory. By scaling up (growing our communities), scaling out (involving more people in ministry), and scaling down (deepening individual relationships), we create a thriving, engaged community. Sacred listening is the foundation of this approach, enabling us to connect, understand, and grow together.



INTRODUCTION TO SACRED LISTENING

What You'll Discover in This Workbook

This workbook is designed to walk you step-by-step through the process of Sacred Listening in the context of an activity that fits your setting.

Here's what you will find:

- Easy to follow process: The three-phase Sacred Listening process focuses interactions and helps you to build your own capacity for deep listening.
- Insightful questioning: Master the art of asking questions that evoke deeper conversations about faith, purpose, and identity.
- Ways to identify patterns: Recording information and finding patterns is key to deep connection and subsequent follow-ups.
- Trust-building strategies: Develop techniques to create environments where faith can be explored freely and sincerely.
- Replicable practices: The steps of the process are built into a template to help you think of any interaction, event, or activity as an opportunity for Sacred Listening.

The Transformative Power of Sacred Listening

These tools are designed intentionally to be both formative and summative. At the end of each Sacred Listening Tool, you will be left with summative information you can use to take the right, next steps to engage someone, and the process of listening deeply to them will form you both into a trusting relationship.

Sacred listening benefits the listener as much as the speaker. By learning to listen with empathy, we open ourselves to transformation, gaining new insights and a deeper connection with the divine as revealed in the lives of others. In listening, we ourselves are heard; in guiding, we too are led.

Sacred Listening Tools are not a transactional form of information gathering, like a survey, and they are not a one-off experience without structure, like a conversation. They are intentionally designed tools to help transform you and your community into a deeper relationship with the divine.

INTRODUCTION TO SACRED LISTENING

A Call to Action

Let this workbook be your guide as you carve fresh trails in the landscape of contemporary faith. To listen—with full presence—is an act of immense reverence and love. It is within the holy exchange of narratives and experiences that trust is reestablished, faith is envisioned, and souls are elevated.

Thank you for choosing to make this journey, for accepting the call to be stewards of curious souls in a world that sorely needs custodians of spiritual wisdom. Your role is crucial, your presence a light. Together, let us step forth with attentive ears and tender hearts, to listen, to discern, and to love.

> "Being listened to is so close to being loved that we can't tell the difference."
> - Rev. Dr. Frank Thomas

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK

This workbook is designed to guide you through the practice of Sacred Listening, fostering deep and meaningful connections. Follow these tips and subsequent steps to ensure you get the most out of your experience.

Take Your Time
Open the activity on a device or print it out. Helpful tip- if you can open it on an iPad or tablet, it scrolls like an eBook. It's a PDF to make sure it can open or print easily.

The first section, "Introduction to Sacred Listening" is just for you to put yourself in the frame of mind. Read through the subsections carefully to orient yourself. These sections share the sentiment, theory, and process for Sacred Listening.

Engage with the content at a comfortable pace. Reflect on the principles and practices presented.

Give yourself the space to fully understand the concepts before moving on to the next section.

Pay attention to the Guidelines section. These were honed through practice and feedback using the tools.

But most of all, make a commitment to shifting your mindset toward relationships rooted in listening as your primary orientation to others in your ministry.

Reflect and Write
When you get to the "Activity" section, pay special attention to the "Purpose" pages. This is the contextual explanation for the specific activity. There are prompts in the activity that queue you to share this Purpose with participants. Take time to write down how you would paraphrase this section or plan to read it aloud to launch the activity. You will share this Purpose during "Set the Tone" in phase 1.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK

As you read the Purpose, jot down any questions that arise. These could be questions for yourself, for group discussion, or for further exploration. What else do you want to do with this activity?

Capture any immediate thoughts, reactions, or insights that the content sparks.

Engage with Prompts
Read through the entire "Activity" section and engage with the prompts before you do the activity with others. There are places where you need to think and prepare.

Throughout the workbook, you will find various prompts designed to deepen your understanding and application of Sacred Listening. Take the time to respond thoughtfully.

Use the provided spaces to write your responses. This helps in tracking your progress and insights.

The "Materials" and "Set-up" pages are for your use, with our suggestions, based on the activity.

Read through all of "1. Intentions"

- This is the cornerstone of Sacred Listening, as it's the sacred tone setting part of the activity.
- Integrate your paraphrasing of the "Purpose" of the activity as you plan this phase out.
- Take notes and highlight places where you want to transition, prompt them to do something, or if you need to prepare.
- This is where you'll put together something that will become a ritual for your time together, so choose what you need for that ritual. i.e., a relevant poem or a line of scripture.
- Plan a few reflection questions and prompt them to share a keyword or just take time to write down their thoughts.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK

Read through all of "2. Ask and Record"

- Think about the ways you need to be present.
- What distractions are in the room?
- What will you practice and embody during the "Align Expectations" portion?
- Write down any additional questions that you may potentially ask during the "Conduct Meaningful Inquiry" section of this phase.
- Write down actual transitions and segues into next steps.

Read through all of "3. Explore and Follow-up"

- Have a plan for bringing your group or person back together after collecting information. Regrouping for the "Explore" can be challenging, so have a plan to grab them right away.
- This section requires planning and forethought because most people aren't in the practice of looking for patterns in things.
- Let your group or person know that you'll be following up with them, and ask permission for how to contact them, when needed.
- Plan regular follow-up sessions or personal check-ins to reinforce the practices and principles of Sacred Listening.
- Encourage ongoing dialogue and interaction among participants or within yourself through reflection and journaling.

Scale Relationships

Scaling is crucial. Plan for how you will follow-up. It can be tempting to think the work is finished when the activity is concluded, but the real power of Sacred Listening Tools comes in the ways you use the information and trust you've gained from the exercise. Schedule follow-ups and be diligent.

Use the insights gained to expand your practice of Sacred Listening to new contexts and relationships.

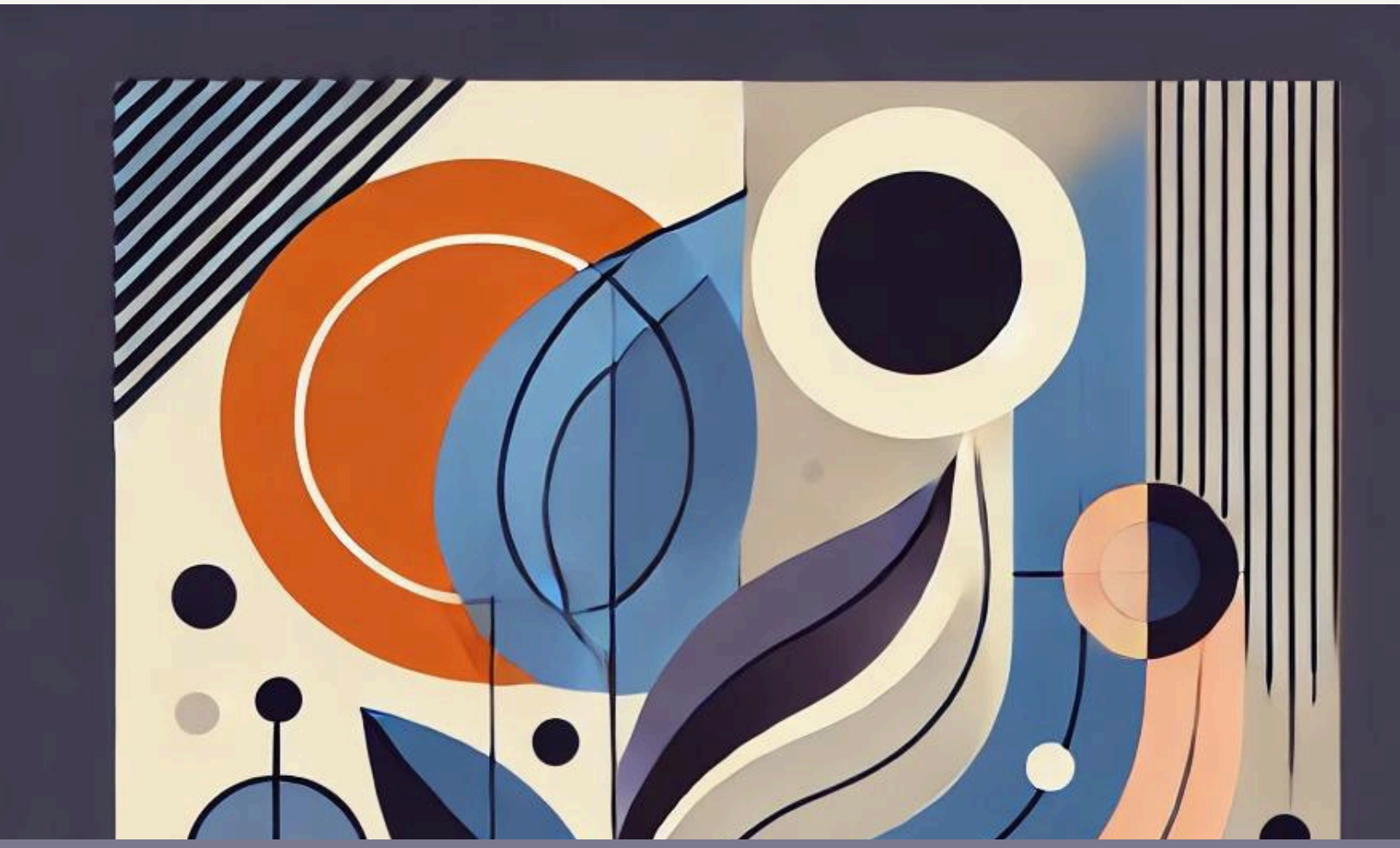
Focus on both scaling out (involving more people) and scaling down (deepening individual connections).

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK

You don't have to be the only one to follow-up. One of the most significant parts of Sacred Listening is that you will learn things that help you connect people to each other. Where someone in your community might be reluctant to sign up as a volunteer indefinitely, they will be much more likely to reach out to someone who is going through a hard time if it is something they have also experienced. Look for connections between people to help build a culture of relationships.

For You

Following the activity is a space for you to reflect, suggestions for follow-up conversations with your group or person, and a step-by-step template to use to build your own Sacred Listening activities and practice, if you'd like. The activities we create are usually built to be done more than once, but you may have your own questions to ask and things you want to do.



SACRED LISTENING PROCESS

Each tool we build follows the process below. This section is for your information only. All you have to do is follow the outline in the pages that follow and we'll guide you through each of these steps.

Phase 1: Intentions

The person sitting across from you is sacred. The space you are creating together is sacred. Sacred Listening begins by recognizing that the interactions you are having with others are powerful, meaningful, and divine. Sacred Listening starts by setting a very intentional, respectful, and empathetic tone for the session that facilitates a deep and meaningful engagement.

To focus on the Intentions Phase:

- **Establish a Sacred Space:** Everyone is sacred, made in the image of the divine, so the time and place you share with your group should be regarded as sacred. Verbally share that with the group and remind them that your time together is safe for people share without judgement.

- **Set the Tone**: Communicate the Purpose (paraphrase or read) and expectations for your time together clearly. This helps put everyone in a similar frame of mind and sets the stage for a heartfelt exchange. Articulate why you are doing this together.

- **Engage Through Rituals:** Introduce rituals that resonate with the group's cultural or spiritual preferences, such as meditation, prayer, or a shared reading, to deepen the collective sense of sacredness. Work together to co-create a ritual that is meaningful to your group. Recreate this same type of ritual practice every time you come together, even if the content changes.

SACRED LISTENING PROCESS

Phase 2: Ask and Record

Questions signify interest and attention. Genuine curiosity aligns people to one another, leading to inclusive dialogue. But inquiry is not always enough to lead to connection. Writing down what others share actively engages you, demonstrating that you are committed to understanding and remembering what they share. It may seem counterintuitive to take notes while someone is sharing, but it is crucial knowing them more deeply.

To focus on the Ask and Record Phase:

- **Alignment**: Carefully tune in to the diverse methods by which individuals express their experiences and truths. Pay attention to how people are engaging. Do they write things down or speak more? Do they draw pictures?

- **Ask Great Questions**: Facilitate a structured dialogue where participants are encouraged to ask and respond to open-ended, meaningful questions. This practice elevates every voice and opens avenues for deeper inquiry.

- **Write it Down**: Demonstrate active listening by taking detailed notes. This not only shows respect and attention to the speakers but also ensures that the insights gathered are remembered and valued.

SACRED LISTENING PROCESS

Phase 3: Explore and Follow-up

Exploration leads to discovery. Explore the information you wrote down to discover patterns, themes, and ideas that emerge. The patterns you find will give you clues to what is happening with the people you engage with and what you should do to follow-up with them. It will also help you know how to scale relationships.

To focus on Explore and Follow-up Phase:

- **Look Back and Learn**: Use the information you collected to have an intentional conversation. You will work together to spot the big ideas and feelings that kept popping up. Look for trends in keywords, behaviors, and shared thoughts.

- **Keep in Touch:** Set up times to meet again or check in with each other. This shows you care about continuing the conversation and value everyone's contributions. Encourage everyone to keep talking and sharing, whether through social media, regular meetings, or casual get-togethers. This keeps your community tight-knit and growing.

- **Spread the Word**: Think about ways to bring more people into relationship. Maybe start a group or network where these conversations can keep blossoming, reaching more people and making a bigger difference. Use the patterns that you found to help connect people to each other.

> "Listening is being able to be changed by the other person."
> – Alan Alda

PURPOSE OF ACTIVITIES

Election seasons can bring out the best and worst in us. They can inspire hope, stir up passion, and encourage civic participation. But they can also create division, stress, and tension within communities, families, and even friendships. In these times, it's easy to feel disconnected, misunderstood, or even isolated. That's why the IDEOS 31 Days of Unity campaign was created—to bring people together around daily scripture, reflection, and prayer, helping us all to reconnect with our shared values and each other. To build on this powerful campaign, we're introducing the Empathy and Unity Through Sacred Listening tool, which is specifically designed to deepen connections, foster empathy, and create spaces for meaningful dialogue during this challenging time.

This tool is all about enhancing our interactions with each other. It's about taking the wisdom from daily scripture and using it as a foundation for listening with empathy and understanding. By practicing Sacred Listening, we're truly connecting with the experiences and emotions of those around us. Whether you're talking with a friend, a family member, or someone you just met, this tool can help you navigate conversations with grace, care, and compassion.

Why This Tool?

Bringing People Together Through Empathy
During election seasons, conversations can quickly become debates, and debates can lead to division. The Fostering Empathy and Unity Sacred Listening tool can help reframe that dynamic. This tool encourages you to focus on understanding and connection, rather than who's right or wrong. By listening with empathy, you create a space where others feel valued, respected, and truly heard.

Empathy is at the heart of Sacred Listening. This guide will help you practice putting yourself in someone else's shoes and really feeling what they're feeling, and remembering that everyone is sacred. When you approach conversations with empathy, you're not just waiting for your turn to speak—you're actively engaging with the other person's experience. This tool helps you hone that skill, so every conversation becomes an opportunity to build bridges instead of walls.

PURPOSE OF ACTIVITIES

Grounding Conversations in Shared Sacred Values
The IDEOS campaign is built around daily scripture that guides participants through themes of Reflection (Re)flect, Renewal (Re)new, and Redemption (Re)deem. These themes are practical tools for living a life rooted in sacred values. The Empathy and Unity Through Sacred Listening tool aligns perfectly with these themes, helping you to bring those values into your everyday conversations.

When you start a conversation grounded in shared values, it's easier to find common ground, even when discussing difficult topics. This tool encourages you to use the day's scripture as a starting point, helping you and the people you're talking to connect on a deeper level. It's about moving beyond the surface and really engaging with what matters most—our shared humanity and the sacredness of each person's experience.

Building Emotional and Spiritual Resilience
Election seasons can be emotionally draining. The constant barrage of news, opinions, and debates can leave us feeling overwhelmed or anxious. The Fostering Empathy and Unity Sacred Listening tool helps you build resilience by encouraging you to center yourself in your faith and approach conversations with a calm, grounded mindset.

Resilience is finding strength in your values and your community. By practicing Sacred Listening, you're giving yourself and others the space to express emotions, share concerns, and find comfort in connection. This tool helps you develop the emotional tools needed to support yourself and others during stressful times, turning potential conflicts into opportunities for growth and deeper understanding.

Practicing Active Compassion and Care
At its core, Sacred Listening is about caring for each other in a way that goes beyond superficial interactions. The Fostering Empathy and Unity Sacred Listening tool invites you to set aside time each day to really listen to those around you. Focus on engaging deeply with what others are saying and responding with genuine compassion.

PURPOSE OF ACTIVITIES

Active compassion means being present, attentive, and responsive to the needs of others. Whether someone is feeling anxious, hopeful, or conflicted about the election, this tool provides a framework for addressing those feelings in a way that builds mutual understanding and solidarity. It's about showing up for each other in meaningful ways, day after day, conversation after conversation.

Expanding and Deepening Relationships

One of the most powerful aspects of the Fostering Empathy and Unity Sacred Listening tool is its ability to help you scale relationships. This isn't about making more friends or connections for the sake of it—it's about deepening the relationships you already have and extending empathy and support to those who might need it.

As you practice Sacred Listening, you'll naturally start to extend your circle of care. You might reach out to someone you haven't talked to in a while, or you might deepen your conversations with those you interact with regularly. This tool helps you to listen more intently and respond more thoughtfully, creating a ripple effect of empathy and understanding that can strengthen entire communities.

Creating a Culture of Lasting Change

The Fostering Empathy and Unity Sacred Listening tool is a practice that can enrich your life and your relationships long after the votes are counted. By embedding Sacred Listening into your daily routine, you're helping to create a culture of empathy, respect, and unity that can withstand the pressures of divisive times.

Lasting change starts with small, consistent actions. Each time you use this tool to engage in a meaningful conversation, you're contributing to a broader shift in how we relate to each other. Over time, these conversations can help build a more empathetic, connected community where people feel safe, heard, and valued. And that's something that can benefit us all, no matter what challenges come our way.



ACTIVITY: DAILY TEXTING TO CONNECT

MATERIALS NEEDED

- **Smartphone or Device with Messaging Capabilities:**
  Ensure all participants have access to a device that allows them to send and receive text messages. Use a messaging platform Like WhatsApp if they aren't comfortable sharing their phone number.

- **Daily Scripture and Reflection Prompts:**
  Prepare a list of the IDEOS 31 Days of Unity scriptures and the corresponding daily text prompts (see "Daily Text Messages" pages).

- **Notebook or Digital Journal:**
  Encourage each participant to keep a physical notebook or digital journal where they can record their daily reflections and insights.

- **Shared Document for Tracking Themes:**
  Set up a shared Google Sheet, Google Doc, or other collaborative platform where participants can record recurring themes, insights, and reflections from their daily text exchanges.



SET UP

Create a list of potential participants:
These could be members of your youth group, ministry, or community who you believe would benefit from the Sacred Listening practice during the election season.

Reach out to each person individually:
Explain the purpose of the 31 Days of Unity campaign and the daily text exercise. Use a combination of methods such as phone calls, emails, or personal conversations to ensure they understand the commitment and value.
Email/Message: "Hi [Name], I hope you're doing well! I'm reaching out because we're starting a special 31 Days of Unity campaign leading up to and following the election. Each day, we'll share a short scripture reflection and a question via text that will help us connect with one another in a meaningful way. I'd love for you to join us in this daily practice. It's a simple but powerful way to stay grounded and connected during this time. Would you be interested in participating?"

Group Messaging Platform- Broadcast list:
For those who would prefer a messaging app, set up a broadcast list on a platform everyone is comfortable with, such as WhatsApp, GroupMe, or a standard text messaging group. Broadcast lists let you send the same individual text messages to many people at a time. Here are the instructions for setting up a broadcast list:
https://faq.whatsapp.com/861663048350950/?helpref=uf_share

Register for 31 Days of Unity Campaign:
Fill out the form at https://www.ideosinstitute.org/31-days-of-unity and have everyone in the group do the same so they get the daily texts with the scripture.

Schedule Daily Messages:
Schedule or set a reminder for yourself to send the daily scripture and reflection text messages at a consistent time each morning. This creates a routine for participants.

Create a simple spreadsheet:
Columns for the date, scripture, reflection question, and key themes or insights from participants' responses. If you can, record keywords from each student on each day.
Example Spreadsheet Columns:

- Date
- Scripture
- Reflection Question
- Key Themes/Insights
- Participant Names (Optional, for personal follow-up)

DAILY TEXT MESSAGES

Reflection (Re)flect
"Today, let's reflect on how we see the divine in ourselves and others. How can this perspective guide our interactions?"

Renewal (Re)new
"As we focus on renewal today, what's one way you can refresh your spirit and renew your commitment to unity?"

Redemption (Re)deem
"Today's theme is redemption. How can we seek forgiveness and extend grace to others?"

Unity
"Unity is our goal today. How can you create harmony in your relationships and build bridges where there are divides?"

Hope
"Let's hold on to hope today. What gives you hope, and how can you share that hope with others?"

Love
"Love is powerful. Today, how can you show love in a way that brings comfort and peace to those around you?"

Peace
"Let's focus on peace today. How can you be a peacemaker in your conversations and actions?"

Forgiveness
"Forgiveness is freeing. Is there someone you need to forgive or ask forgiveness from today?"

Courage
"Courage is stepping forward in faith. What's one brave action you can take today to bring about unity?"

Gratitude
"Gratitude changes our outlook. What are you thankful for today, and how can you express that gratitude to others?"

DAILY TEXT MESSAGES

Faith
"Faith sustains us. How can your faith guide your actions today as you navigate difficult conversations?"

Justice
"Justice is about fairness and equity. How can you stand up for justice in your interactions today?"

Mercy
"Mercy is kindness in the face of hurt. Who can you show mercy to today, and how might that change their day?"

Kindness
"Kindness is a gift we can all give. How can you show extra kindness to someone today?"

Empathy
"Empathy connects us. Take a moment to truly listen to someone today—how can you walk in their shoes?"

Compassion
"Compassion moves us to action. Who might need your compassion today, and how can you extend it to them?"

Understanding
"Understanding builds bridges. Who do you need to understand better today, and how can you start that conversation?"

Service
"Service is love in action. What's one small act of service you can do today to help someone in need?"

Humility
"Humility opens us to growth. How can you practice humility today in your thoughts and actions?"

Respect
"Respect fosters trust. How can you show respect in your interactions today, even with those you disagree with?"

DAILY TEXT MESSAGES

Joy
"Joy is contagious. What brings you joy, and how can you spread that joy to others today?"

Generosity
"Generosity is giving without expecting. What can you give today—time, attention, kindness?"

Self-Control
"Self-control helps us respond rather than react. How can you practice self-control today in your conversations?"

Honesty
"Honesty builds trust. How can you be more honest in your relationships today, with others and with yourself?"

Healing
"Healing begins with listening. Who might need a listening ear from you today?"

Reconciliation
"Reconciliation repairs relationships. Is there someone you need to reach out to today to mend a broken relationship?"

Commitment
"Commitment strengthens bonds. What can you commit to today that will help build unity and trust?"

Sacrifice
"Sacrifice is giving up something for a greater good. What can you give up today to help someone else?"

Trust
"Trust is the foundation of strong relationships. How can you build or rebuild trust today?"

Wisdom
"Wisdom guides our decisions. What wisdom can you seek or share today to promote understanding and unity?"

1.INTENTIONS

The person sitting across from you is sacred. The space you are creating together is sacred. Sacred Listening begins by recognizing that the interactions you are having with others are powerful, meaningful, and divine. Sacred Listening starts by setting a very intentional, respectful, and empathetic tone for the session that facilitates a deep and meaningful engagement.

01 ESTABLISH A SACRED SPACE

Opening Text Message (Day 1)

Make sure you have done all of the set up on the previous pages to invite people into this "space" and to get everyone on the same page so that you can focus on listening and not logistics. On the first day of the campaign, send a message that establishes the practice as a sacred space for reflection, connection, and support. Emphasize the sacredness of the time and space you'll be sharing through these daily texts.

Script Example: "Welcome to Day 1 of our 31 Days of Unity. This space is sacred, and our time together is precious. Over the next month, we'll reflect on scripture, listen deeply to each other, and support one another as we navigate this season. Each of us is sacred, and I'm grateful to share this journey with you."

1.INTENTIONS

02 SET THE TONE

Text Message (Day 1)

Use the first day's message to paraphrase the purpose of the practice, setting the tone for the days ahead. Reinforce the importance of empathy, connection, and the shared values grounded in scripture.

Script Example: "As we begin, remember that this practice is about building empathy, deepening our connections, and grounding ourselves in shared values. Let's use each scripture to guide our thoughts and actions, and support one another with kindness and understanding."

Ask you craft messages, keep in mind that the goal is that participants will:

- Reflect on scripture that speaks to the challenges and opportunities of the election season.
- Share their thoughts and feelings in a supportive, non-judgmental space.
- Build a daily habit of empathy and connection that strengthens relationships and provides emotional and spiritual resilience.

1.INTENTIONS

03

ENGAGE THROUGH RITUALS

Text Message (Day 1)

Introduce the idea of the daily ritual. Explain how each day's scripture and reflection will be a moment to pause, reflect, and connect, even if only through a simple text message.

Script Example: "Each morning (day), I'll share a question to reflect on. Let's make this a daily ritual—a moment to pause, breathe, and connect with each other through these shared reflections."

REFLECTION

2.ASK AND RECORD

Questions signify interest and attention. Genuine curiosity aligns people to one another, leading to inclusive dialogue. But inquiry is not always enough to lead to connection. Writing down what others share actively engages you, demonstrating that you are committed to understanding and remembering what they share. It may seem counterintuitive to take notes while someone is sharing, but it is crucial to knowing them more deeply.

01 ALIGNMENT

Encourage group members to share their thoughts in the way that feels most comfortable to them, acknowledging that these conversations can be challenging. Remind them that there is no right or wrong way to express themselves.

Example Text: "Feel free to share your thoughts in whatever way is comfortable for you—whether that's through a quick text, a longer message, or even a voice note. There's no right or wrong way to express what you're feeling."

Pay attention to how they respond to future prompts. Do you get a tapback? An emoji? Nothing...ever? That's information to note. They opted in, but they aren't engaging. Maybe they need a different time of day or mode of communication.

02 ASK GREAT QUESTIONS

Daily Text Message:

Each day, send the scripture along with a brief reflection question from the list you've prepared. These questions should encourage participants to think deeply and respond when they feel comfortable.

Example Daily Text: "Day 2: As we focus on renewal today, what's one way you can refresh your spirit and renew your commitment to unity?"

Respond Thoughtfully

When participants share their reflections, respond with empathy and encouragement. This shows that you're actively listening and that their contributions are valued.

Example Response: "Thank you for sharing that. It's powerful to see how [specific insight] is resonating with you. Let's keep supporting each other in this."

2.ASK AND RECORD

03 WRITE IT DOWN

They write down

Encourage participants to jot down their thoughts or any meaningful insights that come up during the day, whether in a journal or as notes on their phone.

You write down

As participants respond, keep track of the themes, emotions, and insights shared. Use a shared document or a personal journal to note down key points. This will help you identify patterns and areas where further support might be needed.

Tracking Example: "Today, several people mentioned feeling renewed by reconnecting with their faith. I'll note this as a key theme for our ongoing reflections."

3.EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

01 LOOK BACK AND LEARN

Encourage participants to look back at their notes or reflections from the week and identify any patterns or recurring themes. This reflection helps them see where they might need more support or where they've found strength. Write down what they share.

Example Text: "Take a moment to look back at your notes from this week. What patterns are you noticing? Are there any themes that keep coming up?"

Read what you've been noting throughout as you've asked questions. What words come up over and over again? What moods, ideas, stories have been shared by more than one person? Or even by the same person repeatedly? Record those themes here.

Organize the Responses

Collect Responses: Gather all the text messages or written responses in one place. This could be done in a shared document, a spreadsheet, or a designated group chat.

Categorize by Day/Topic: Organize the responses according to the specific day or theme they relate to. For instance, if you're following the daily IDEOS scripture, categorize responses by the scripture or theme for each day.

Identify Themes and Patterns

Look for Repeated Words or Phrases: As you review the text responses, highlight words or phrases that come up frequently. These repetitions often indicate the main concerns or emotions of the group.

Example: If multiple participants frequently mention "anxiety" or "hope," these are key themes to explore further.

Categorize Emotions: Pay attention to the emotional tone of the responses. Categorize them into emotions such as joy, fear, anger, sadness, or hope. Create columns in your spreadsheet or sections in your document labeled with these emotions and tally how often each is expressed.

Identify Story Arcs: Look for these arcs to understand how participants' feelings or perspectives change over time. A participant might start the week expressing uncertainty, but by the end of the week, they may express a sense of peace or acceptance.

3.EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

02

KEEP IN TOUCH

Encourage participants to stay in touch through daily or weekly text messages. These messages should be simple but meaningful, offering support and checking in on how everyone is doing.

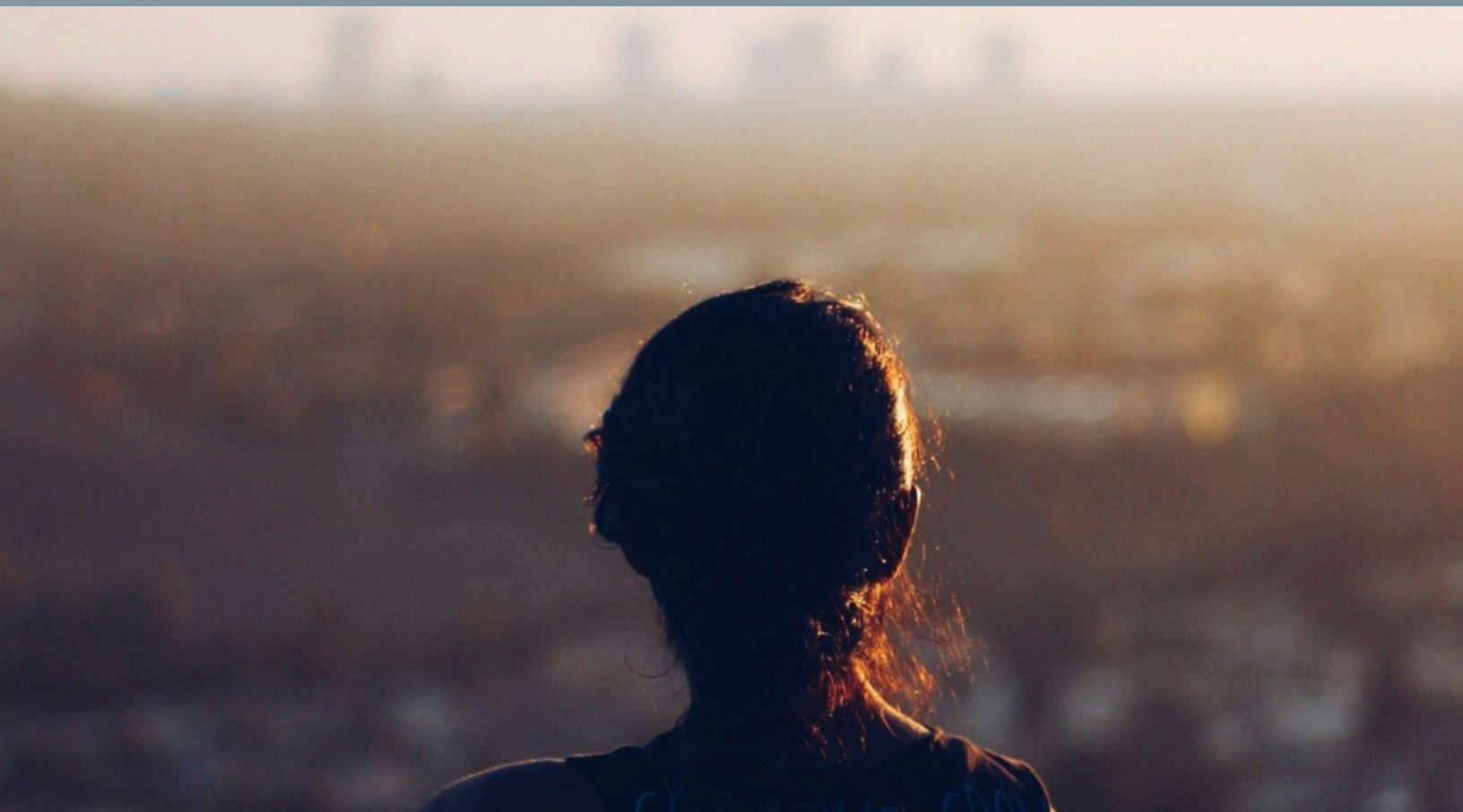
Example Text: "Just checking in—how are you doing with everything we talked about this week? Remember, we're all here for each other, so don't hesitate to reach out if you need to talk."

03

SPREAD THE WORD

Encourage participants to share their experiences with others and consider inviting new people to join the group. Expanding the circle helps build a more connected and supportive community. Connect them with people who are feeling the same way that they are- with their permission, of course. Capture other ways that you can use this to spread care and empathy during this season and beyond.

Example Text: "If you know someone who might benefit from our conversations, invite them to join us. The more we share and listen, the stronger our community becomes."





ACTIVITY: SHARE IN A GROUP

MATERIALS NEEDED

- **Comfortable Meeting Space:**
  Arrange a quiet, comfortable space where participants can sit in a circle or semi-circle to facilitate open communication and eye contact.

- **Printed or Displayed Daily Scripture:**
  Have copies of the daily scripture available or display them on a screen for everyone to see during the gathering.

- **Notebooks and Pens:**
  Provide each participant with a notebook and pen for taking notes during discussions.

- **Refreshments:**
  Simple snacks or drinks can help create a welcoming environment and encourage relaxation and openness.

- **Whiteboard or Flip Chart (Optional):**
  Use for jotting down key themes, ideas, or questions that come up during the discussion, visible to the entire group.

- **Recording Device (Optional):**
  If participants are comfortable, you might record key insights during the session for later reflection (ensure confidentiality is respected).

SET UP

- [ ] **Register for 31 Days of Unity Campaign:**
Fill out the form at Gather all materials listed above. and have everyone in the group do the same so they get the daily texts with the scripture.

- [ ] **Prepare the Space:**
Arrange chairs in a circle or semi-circle in a quiet room. Place the symbolic ritual item(s) at the center or in a visible location to establish the sacred space.

- [ ] **Set Up Visual Aids:**
Ensure the daily scripture is ready to be displayed or distributed. If using a whiteboard or flip chart, have it set up with markers ready for noting down key discussion points.

- [ ] **Distribute Materials:**
Provide each participant with a notebook and pen as they arrive. Encourage them to use these materials to jot down thoughts during the discussion.

- [ ] **Create a simple spreadsheet:**
Columns for the date, scripture, reflection question, and key themes or insights from participants' responses. If you can, record keywords from each student on each day. It seems like a lot, but the information will be KEY to following up and building trust. This will help you see trends over time and prepare for any group discussions.
Example Spreadsheet Columns:
  - Date
  - Scripture
  - Reflection Question
  - Key Themes/Insights
  - Participant Names (Optional, for personal follow-up)

1.INTENTIONS

The person sitting across from you is sacred. The space you are creating together is sacred. Sacred Listening begins by recognizing that the interactions you are having with others are powerful, meaningful, and divine. Sacred Listening starts by setting a very intentional, respectful, and empathetic tone for the session that facilitates a deep and meaningful engagement.

01

ESTABLISH A SACRED SPACE

Begin the meeting by creating a sacred space. Verbally acknowledge that each participant is made in the image of the divine, and that your time together is a safe space for sharing without judgment.

Example Script: "Before we start, let's recognize that our time together is sacred. Each of us is made in the image of the divine, and this space is where we can share openly without fear of judgment."

1.INTENTIONS

02 SET THE TONE

Make notes about the “Purpose” section that you want to share to set the tone and expectations for the activity. Clarity is kindness. Use your own words or what we’ve provided below.

Share the following about the activity, along with or instead of your notes about the Purpose:

“We will use our time together to use the scripture and listen to each other. Then, as we go out into the world on our own, we will continue this practice with daily messages and check-ins. Our in-person time will help us know how to listen to each other and set up the best way to continue on through this season.”

Then- set up the time together with the chosen scripture:
"Today’s scripture speaks about [Reflection/Renewal/Redemption], and it’s a reminder of how important it is for us to listen and support one another. Our goal today is to really hear each other’s thoughts and feelings and to create a space where everyone feels valued."

1.INTENTIONS

03

ENGAGE THROUGH RITUALS

Introduce the idea of the daily ritual. Explain how each day's scripture and reflection will be a moment to pause, reflect, and connect, even if only through a simple text message.

Script Example: "Each morning (day), I'll share a question to reflect on. Let's make this a daily ritual—a moment to pause, breathe, and connect with each other through these shared reflections."

Demonstrate what this will be like by doing it in person. Send them a practice message and choose a time together that the subsequent messages will go out.

REFLECTION

2.ASK AND RECORD

Questions signify interest and attention. Genuine curiosity aligns people to one another, leading to inclusive dialogue. But inquiry is not always enough to lead to connection. Writing down what others share actively engages you, demonstrating that you are committed to understanding and remembering what they share. It may seem counterintuitive to take notes while someone is sharing, but it is crucial to knowing them more deeply.

01 ALIGNMENT

Acknowledge that participants might have different comfort levels when it comes to sharing. Encourage them to express themselves in whatever way feels right, whether that's speaking, writing, or even drawing.

Example Script: "I know these conversations can be tough, and it's okay to share in whatever way feels best for you. If you'd rather write your thoughts down first or draw them, that's perfectly fine. What's important is that we're here for each other."

02 ASK GREAT QUESTIONS

During the group meeting, facilitate deeper conversations by asking open-ended questions that relate to the scripture and the participants' current experiences. These questions should encourage participants to share more deeply and listen to one another with empathy.

Example Questions:

"What part of today's scripture resonates most with how you've been feeling?"
"What has been the most challenging part of this election season for you?"
"In what ways have you found hope or comfort during this time?"

Text to Connect (Daily Follow-Up):
Throughout the remaining days, send short, follow-up questions that encourage ongoing reflection and connection. These can be simple prompts to keep the conversation going, or use the text prompts from the previous activity.

Example Text: "What's one thing you've found comforting this week? How can we support each other in that?"

2.ASK AND RECORD

03 WRITE IT DOWN

They write down

During the gathering, ask participants to take notes on what they hear, whether it's a particular insight, a recurring theme, or a strong emotion. This helps them stay engaged and provides a record for future reflection.

In the time beyond your in-person gathering, encourage participants to jot down their thoughts or any meaningful insights that come up during the day, whether in a journal or as notes on their phone.

You write down

As participants respond and share out loud, keep track of the themes, emotions, and insights shared. Use a shared document or a personal journal to note down key points. This will help you identify patterns and areas where further support might be needed.

Tracking Example: "Today, several people mentioned feeling renewed by reconnecting with their faith. I'll note this as a key theme for our ongoing reflections."

3.EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

01 LOOK BACK AND LEARN

Encourage participants to look back at their notes or reflections from your group discussion and identify any patterns or recurring themes. Review their notes and themes. Facilitate a discussion about what these patterns reveal about the group's collective experiences and needs. Write down what they share.

Example Text: "Take a moment to look back at your notes from our time together. What patterns are you noticing? Are there any themes that keep coming up? As we look at the themes that have emerged from our discussions—like feelings of uncertainty or moments of hope—let's talk about how we can continue to support each other in these areas."

Read what you've been noting throughout as you've asked questions. What words come up over and over again? What moods, ideas, stories have been shared by more than one person? Or even by the same person repeatedly? Record those themes here.

Continue to analyze text responses

Collect Responses: Gather all the text messages or written responses in one place. This could be done in a shared document, a spreadsheet, or a designated group chat.

Categorize by Day/Topic: Organize the responses according to the specific day or theme they relate to. For instance, if you're following the daily IDEOS scripture, categorize responses by the scripture or theme for each day.

Identify Themes and Patterns

Look for Repeated Words or Phrases: As you review the text responses, highlight words or phrases that come up frequently. These repetitions often indicate the main concerns or emotions of the group.

Example: If multiple participants frequently mention "anxiety" or "hope," these are key themes to explore further.

Categorize Emotions: Pay attention to the emotional tone of the responses. Categorize them into emotions such as joy, fear, anger, sadness, or hope. Create columns in your spreadsheet or sections in your document labeled with these emotions and tally how often each is expressed.

3.EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

02

KEEP IN TOUCH

At the end of each gathering, if you haven't done so already, plan specific times for follow-up check-ins. Encourage participants to reach out to one another during the week, either through text, calls, or in-person meetups.

Example Plan: "Let's make sure to check in with each other before our next meeting. Whether it's a quick text or a longer conversation, let's keep supporting each other throughout the week."

Ongoing Support:
Action: Establish a routine where participants know they can expect regular communication. This consistency helps build trust and ensures that everyone feels connected and supported, even when they're not meeting in person.

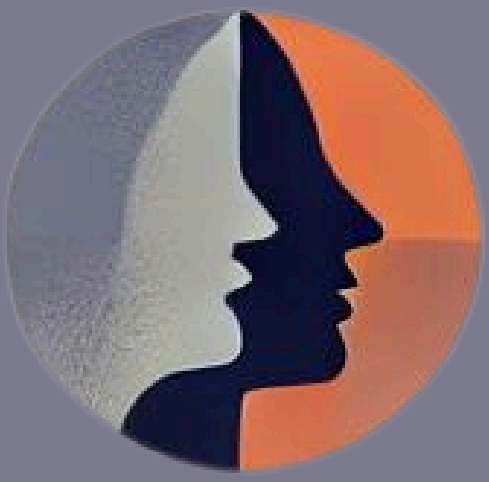
Example Schedule: "We'll send out a quick check-in message every Wednesday to see how everyone is doing mid-week. Feel free to respond whenever you can, and let's keep the conversation going."

03

SPREAD THE WORD

Encourage participants to share their experiences with others and consider inviting new people to join the group. Expanding the circle helps build a more connected and supportive community. Connect them with people who are feeling the same way that they are- with their permission, of course. Capture other ways that you can use this to spread care and empathy during this season and beyond.

Example Text: "If you know someone who might benefit from our conversations, invite them to join us. The more we share and listen, the stronger our community becomes."



ACTIVITY: EVERY DAY SACRED LISTENING

PURPOSE

SACRED LISTENING IN YOUR DAILY LIFE
An unspecified activity to listen better…to anyone

In times of division, like during an election season, conversations can become tense, and relationships can be strained. The Empathetic Conversations for Unity and Care tool is designed to help you navigate these challenging moments by deepening connections through Sacred Listening. This tool is an extension of the IDEOS 31 Days of Unity campaign, which encourages daily reflection on scripture to foster a spirit of unity and understanding. By integrating Sacred Listening into your daily interactions, you can transform potentially divisive conversations into opportunities for empathy, support, and connection.



MATERIALS NEEDED

- [ ] The daily scripture passage from the 31 Days of Unity campaign
- [ ] A quiet, comfortable space for conversation
- [ ] A journal or note-taking materials for personal reflection

SET UP

- [ ] **Prepare Your Space:**
Find a quiet place where you can have an uninterrupted conversation, whether it's a cozy corner at home, a park, or a quiet café.

  Ensure that the environment is comfortable and conducive to open, honest dialogue.

- [ ] **Prepare Yourself:**
Begin by reflecting on the day's scripture passage and any insights or emotions it stirred in you. Spend a few moments in silent meditation or prayer, grounding yourself in the intention to listen deeply and empathetically.

  Set an intention for your conversation, focusing on listening first, understanding, and creating a space where the other person feels valued and heard.

1.INTENTIONS

The person sitting across from you is sacred. The space you are creating together is sacred. Sacred Listening begins by recognizing that the interactions you are having with others are powerful, meaningful, and divine. Sacred Listening starts by setting a very intentional, respectful, and empathetic tone for the session that facilitates a deep and meaningful engagement.

01 ESTABLISH A SACRED SPACE

Before initiating the conversation, take a moment to center yourself. Reflect on the sacredness of the interaction you're about to have, recognizing that both you and the person you're speaking with carry divine worth.

To yourself: "I'm about to engage in a conversation where I'll listen deeply and open my heart to understanding another's perspective. This person is sacred, and I'm committed to being fully present."

1.INTENTIONS

02

SET THE TONE

When you begin the conversation, gently share your intention with the other person. Let them know that your goal is to listen and understand, not to debate or persuade.

Example Script: "I've been reflecting on some things lately and would love to hear your thoughts too. I'm here to listen and understand your perspective."

03

ENGAGE THROUGH RITUALS

Read the following poem to yourself before engaging with others:

The listener's path, a journey so profound,
Where words are felt, and meanings found.
A trail of echoes, a track of sounds,
In listening, the soul abounds.

Spend a few minutes reflecting and write down what this poem means to you and your time with others. Use the lines below for more questions or for reflection.

2.ASK AND RECORD

Questions signify interest and attention. Genuine curiosity aligns people to one another, leading to inclusive dialogue. But inquiry is not always enough to lead to connection. Writing down what others share actively engages you, demonstrating that you are committed to understanding and remembering what they share. It may seem counterintuitive to take notes while someone is sharing, but it is crucial to knowing them more deeply.

01 ALIGNMENT

As the other person responds, focus entirely on what they're saying. Listen not just to their words, but to the emotions and experiences behind them. Allow them to speak without interruption.

Reflect Back: Once they've shared, summarize or reflect back what you heard to ensure you've understood correctly.

Example Script: "It sounds like you're feeling [emotion] about [issue]. I really appreciate you sharing that with me."



2.ASK AND RECORD

02 ASK GREAT QUESTIONS

Initiate the Conversation
Start the dialogue by briefly sharing a thought or question that arose from your morning reflection on the scripture. Use this as a gentle entry point into the conversation.
Example Opening: "This morning, I was reflecting on today's scripture about [topic from the passage], and it made me think about how we're all processing what's going on right now. How have you been feeling about everything?"

Deepen the Dialogue
Ask follow-up questions that invite further reflection or sharing. Encourage them to explore their thoughts and feelings more deeply.
Example Questions:

> "Can you tell me more about what's been on your mind lately?"
> "How does what we talked about relate to how you're feeling about the current situation?"

Asking Empathetic Questions
Begin with questions that invite the other person to share more about their experiences, thoughts, and emotions.
Example Questions:

> "How are you feeling about everything going on right now?"
> "What part of today's scripture resonates with you, given what's happening in the world?"
> "What's been on your mind lately as we approach the election?"

Focus on Emotions
Encourage the person to explore and express their emotions. This helps build empathy and understanding.
Example Follow-Ups:

> "It sounds like you're feeling [emotion] about [situation]. Can you tell me more about that?"
> "What has been the most challenging part of this for you?"

2.ASK AND RECORD

03 WRITE IT DOWN

Recording Key Insights

Take note of any significant themes, emotions, or needs that come up during the conversation. These notes can be mental or written, depending on what feels most appropriate. This will help you remember what's important to them and guide your future interactions.

Example Insight: "They mentioned feeling particularly anxious about [specific issue]. I'll make a point to check in on that topic in our next conversation."

Share Your Reflections Thoughtfully

After listening, if it feels right, share your own reflections in a way that connects with what they've said. Keep the focus on mutual understanding and support.

Example Script: "I've been thinking about that too, especially in light of today's scripture. It really helped me see that even in tough times, there's a lot we can hold onto. What do you think?"

3.EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

01 LOOK BACK AND LEARN

Reflect on the Conversation Together
After both of you have shared, take a moment to reflect on the key themes or insights that emerged during the conversation. Discuss how these insights might influence your actions or thoughts moving forward.

Example Reflection: "I'm really glad we talked about this. It's made me think differently about how I approach [specific issue]. What about you?"

Express Gratitude and Support
Close the conversation by expressing gratitude for their openness and sharing. Offer your support moving forward, whether that's checking in again, praying together, or simply being available to listen.

Example Script: "Thank you for sharing with me. It means a lot to have these conversations. Let's keep in touch and support each other through this time."

02 KEEP IN TOUCH

If the conversation was particularly meaningful, suggest a time to check in again. This helps build a deeper, ongoing connection.

Example Script: "Would you be open to chatting again next week? I'd love to hear how things are going and share more of what we're both reflecting on."

3.EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

03

SPREAD THE WORD

Consider ways to involve more people in these meaningful conversations, just as the IDEOS campaign seeks to foster unity across broader communities. You might start a small group, invite friends to join, or even create a social media space where these discussions can flourish. The goal is to use the patterns and insights you've gathered to connect people with similar experiences or concerns, helping the message of reflection, renewal, and redemption spread further.

Example Outreach: "I've been thinking about how beneficial these conversations have been for us. What if we invited a few more friends next time? We could really create a strong support network as we all navigate this season together."





FOR YOU AND FOLLOW-UP

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR DOING SACRED LISTENING

Lean into the "Sacred"

- Mindset Shift: Remind yourself that every interaction is sacred. That person sitting across from you is a reflection of God, star stuff, divine energy…sacred.
- Understand Intentions: Most people don't take any time at all to breathe, center, be still, or even be present. Intention-setting by using a ritual, no matter how small, anchors you to the sacred being you're interacting with. A deep breath, a moving poem, a song, a candle; it's a symbol of their importance to you, and the significance of the moment.

How to Be Present When Listening

- Ground Yourself: Just as you set an intention for your time with others, make sure you do that for yourself. Before starting an activity, take a moment to center yourself. Deep breaths and a moment of silence can help you focus and be fully present.
- Maintain Eye Contact: Show your engagement and respect through eye contact but be mindful of cultural differences regarding direct eye contact.
- Body Language: Use open and relaxed body language to create a welcoming atmosphere.

Active Listening and Alignment

- Reflective Listening: Paraphrase what the speaker has said to show understanding and encourage them to expand on their thoughts.
- Ask Open-Ended Questions: Encourage deeper conversation with questions that require more than yes or no answers.
- Non-Verbal Cues: Nod, smile, and use other non-verbal affirmations to show that you are engaged.
- Ways of Sharing: Be very intentional about how you ask people to share. Offer options for communication to honor different styles and needs.

Listen More, Speak Less

- Respect Sacred Moments: Consider each person's story as sacred. Avoid interrupting, as you wouldn't disrupt a sacred moment.
- Practice Patience: Allow the speaker to finish their thoughts without rushing to respond.
- Don't Have Answers: You don't need to have answers, solutions, or even a response. "I don't know" is an acceptable thing to say. So is nothing at all.

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR DOING SACRED LISTENING

The Laws of Listening

- Listen First: Prioritize truly hearing the speaker's words and emotions before formulating your response.
- Listen Again: Reflect on what was said, confirming your understanding.
- Listen More: Continue to engage with the speaker's message, demonstrating ongoing interest and respect.

Prime Them to Share

- Preparation: Let participants know in advance that they will be sharing their stories. Give them time to prepare mentally and emotionally.
- Encouragement: Reassure them that their voice is valuable and appreciated. Make sure they know their words are safe with you.
- Transparency: Share your own stories that are relevant without taking up too much space. Be an open person.

Embrace Silence

- Silence is Sacred: Create an environment where silence is comfortable. It is a space for reflection and processing.
- Respect the Pause: Allow silences to exist naturally. If you respect and revere the silence, so will they.
- Make Silence and Normalize it: Be quiet so that silence happens, then emote positively, breathe again, and demonstrate that you're embracing it as a sacred moment. Just let it happen.

Pre-Write Prompts and Follow-Up Questions

- Be Prepared: Write prompts and follow-up questions to pull from in advance to ensure a smooth flow of conversation. You don't want to be formulating your next question while they're speaking.
- Adapt as Needed: Use these prepared questions as a guide but remain flexible based on the direction of the conversation.
- Open-Ended Questions: Use questions like "What has been on your mind lately?" or "Can you tell me more about that?"
- Follow-Up: Reflect back what you've heard and ask for more detail. Example: "That sounds challenging. How did you feel about it?"

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR DOING SACRED LISTENING

Handling Difficult Conversations

- Empathetic Responses: When someone shares something difficult, respond with empathy. Phrases like "Thank you for sharing that with me" or "I can't imagine how that feels" can be validating.
- Follow-Up Ideas: Ask gentle follow-up questions that allow the speaker to elaborate if they choose. "Can you tell me more about that experience?" or "How has that affected you?"

Flexibility

- Adaptability: Be okay with the session not going according to plan. Flexibility allows for genuine and meaningful interactions.
- Go with the Flow: Let the conversation naturally evolve, even if it deviates from the planned structure.
- Patterns: The patterns you discover in the information you collect will make sense to you. Let them emerge and be patient with yourself as they do. You'll see patterns in individuals and in groups.

Transparency and Trust

- Clear Communication: Explain why recording their words is beneficial, especially in spaces where trust may be an issue.
- Building Trust: Be honest about the purpose of the recordings and how they will be used to honor their stories.

> "Silence is essentially a surrender to the holiness of the divine mystery."
>
> – Sister Wendy

DIY SACRED LISTENING

As we started using the Sacred Listening tools in the field, we realized that it would be helpful for you to have a set of prompts and action steps to build your own version using activities that your group or community enjoys. This DIY guide helps you take your local knowledge and put it into our framework so you can use any activity to make connections, gather information, and scale relationships. We suggest following the steps of this guide with your group as a community building exercise!

Instructions: Use this template to create your own Sacred Listening activity for any interaction. It can be used for anything from building a full-scale activity to using the prompts to practice everyday engagement.

01

INTENTIONS

Objective: Recognize and establish the sacred nature of the interaction.

Establish a Sacred Space

Prompt: Begin by acknowledging that each person here is sacred. Remind each other that this space is sacred and free of judgment, where all ideas are welcome.
Action: Describe how you will create a sacred space (e.g., a moment of silence, a grounding exercise).

Set the Tone

Prompt: Clearly state the purpose and expectations for this interaction, emphasizing care and mutual respect.
Action: Write down your purpose and expectations for the session.

Engage Through Rituals

Prompt: Introduce a ritual that resonates with the group's cultural or spiritual preferences to deepen the sense of sacredness.
Action: Describe the ritual you will use (e.g., meditation, prayer, shared reading).

DIY SACRED LISTENING

02

ASK AND RECORD

Objective: Facilitate inclusive dialogue through genuine curiosity and active notetaking.

Alignment

Prompt: Pay attention to how individuals express their experiences. Note different engagement styles.

Action: Describe how you will observe and record these expressions.

A*sk Better Questions*

Prompt: Encourage open-ended, meaningful questions that invite deeper responses.

Action: List three to five open-ended questions you will ask (e.g., "What was a meaningful experience for you recently?").

Write it Down

Prompt: Show respect and attention by taking detailed notes.

Action: Decide who will take notes and how the notes will be recorded (e.g., notebook, digital document).

DIY SACRED LISTENING

03

EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

Objective: Identify patterns and themes to deepen relationships and plan future engagements.

Look Back and Learn

Prompt: Review the notes to identify key themes and patterns. Discuss the big ideas and feelings that emerged.

Action: Describe how you will review and discuss the collected information.

Keep in Touch

Prompt: Plan follow-up meetings or check-ins to continue the conversation.

Action: Write down your plan for regular check-ins or follow-up meetings.

Spread the Word

Prompt: Think about ways to involve more people in these conversations and expand your circle.

Action: Describe how you will share your insights and engage more people (e.g., starting new groups, hosting events).

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS AND REFLECTION

For the 4 weeks following your activity, check in with each person you connected with in a meaningful way. You can text them once a week and either ask them a personally crafted question based on something from your time together, or one of these directed questions. They should know you're thinking of them, and that you don't want anything from them. Note how they responded (or didn't). You don't have to track specific answers, but rather their receptiveness, openness, opportunities you have to adjust your messaging, etc.

Week 1: Have you connected with someone this week that means a lot to you?

Week 2: How many conversations have you had about faith, religion, spirituality, etc. this week?

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS AND REFLECTION

Week 3: How many times did you feel uncertain about talking to someone about faith, religion, spirituality, etc.?

Week 4: Who can you go to this week to have a conversation about faith, religion, spirituality, etc.?

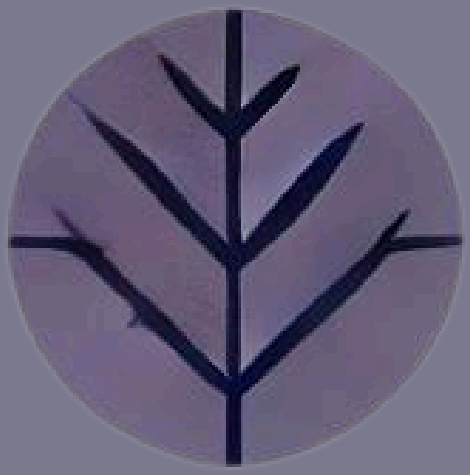
YOUR REFLECTION

This page is for your own reflection and follow up notes. This is a great place to capture future questions, observe patterns, and be reflective of your own behaviors, biases, and feelings during this exercise.

Be honest with yourself. Where are the places that you are uniquely positioned to be a trusted person in your community? What is getting in your way? How can you listen better? What are the listening practices you need to develop?

THANK YOU!

We are honored that you are part of the Future of Faith community. We are committed to listening more deeply so that we can have better conversations, ask better questions, and tell better stories in our faith lives. Please visit our website for more exercises focused on different audiences and objectives. www.futureoffaith.org



FUTURE OF FAITH

Sacred Tools for Courageous Connection

