

Listening Team Values:

Serving ministry environments such as church services and prayer gatherings.

WHAT IS A “LISTENING TEAM?” Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. **Ephesians 5:23** and **Colossians 1:18**. The only way any of us who lead churches or parachurch ministries can truly affirm that Jesus is the Head of our organization is this: **WE MUST LISTEN!**

Learning how to listen to the Lord is a major focus of More of His Fullness ministry. You can find articles called “Hearing the Spirit: Five Questions” and “How to Test a Prophetic Word” at MoreofHisFullness.com. Look in the Tool Chest, Drawer Three.

In the mid-1980’s, pastors from various cities or regions were invited by Dr. Joe Aldrich, President of Multnomah School of the Bible, to come together at Cannon Beach Conference Center on the Oregon Coast. This was the beginning of the Pastors’ Prayer Summit movement. Pastors from a broad range of Bible-believing churches and denominations gathered there with no agenda but to pray together for four days. They circled the chairs and just waited on the Lord.

Many of us were not consciously aware that the gatherings were quietly being shepherded by what was called a “Listening Team.” These were composed of three pastors who were designated to observe quietly what the Lord was unfolding among us. They were chosen from outside our group of ministers, so they could function as humble and objective “watchers.”

As they listened, they would quietly consult with each other. Only if they agreed that what the Lord was clearly unfolding began to be sidetracked, they might quietly intervene with words something like – “We sense God was leading our prayers in this particular direction. We sense that God may have more to unfold here. May we suggest that we take a few moments in silent prayer, and see if the Lord would continue to lead us to know His heart in that particular direction?”

Many of us pastors came to value the “listening team” concept and adapted it for use on our local churches. Debriefing the “listeners” proves valuable in discerning and sustaining the direction in which the Spirit was leading, not just in a given service, but over time. In the churches where I ministered, here are the values we identified for the listening teams to be effective:

CLARIFYING THE VALUES: Below are the values simply stated, with a fuller explanation. Note: These are “values,” not “rules.” We do not control but desire the Spirit to be in control. Each value is stated positively, and yet, if we disregard it, there is a dark side that could inhibit God’s direction.

1. **GIFTS:** All true manifestations of the Spirit are supernatural, valuable, and to be welcomed.

THIS MEANS: The definition of a “spiritual gift” is in 1 Corinthians 12:7. Our focus is on letting God be God, doing what He wills through whomever He chooses. This is not primarily a place to advance nor to diminish any particular gifting. We must not separate the gift from the Giver. It’s not about “it,” but about “Him!” Here, gifts are “tools,” not “toys.” We put the gifts to work for the King.

2. **FRUIT:** The spiritual qualities of love, patience, and humility help us work well together in unity.

THIS MEANS: The true common denominator of all Spirit-filled believers is the fruit of the Spirit, rather than a particular gift of the Spirit (1 Cor. 13:1-8). The Spirit works in us to create a godly, healthy relationship between very different members of Christ’s Body, the Church. Humility will help us avoid the error Paul sought to correct in 1 Corinthians 12. Love gives preference to others.

3. **LEARNING:** We’re open to fresh experiences of God’s Spirit in this practical laboratory of prayer.

THIS MEANS: The term “laboratory” starts with the word “labor.” Our intercessory prayer sessions have a primary and a secondary function. First, we do the hard work of pleading with God for His

Kingdom and glory to intervene in our broken world. Second, we have the unique opportunity to experience the supernatural leading of the Spirit, beyond our past experience or “comfort zone.” As we walk together in the prophetic, we look for confirmation, first and foremost, from Scripture; then from the Lord through other means, such as inner witness (peace), providential input, and agreement with fellow believers who are walking in the Spirit. In time, and with good experience, we can learn to embrace a profound truth: We can trust the Holy Spirit in one another. Keep your eyes on Him.

4. **ACCEPTING:** We love one another without judging, comparisons, or a religious spirit. “You’re safe!”

THIS MEANS: The eyes of our hearts are to be focused on God, not others. We learn together. The Spirit can use imperfect, less than mature people. Listening Team people are to be given a “safe place” to bring them forward into greater Christlikeness. This must be a safe place to grow, to try, even to fail, to learn, and to try again. Failure is not final. That’s when we do our greatest learning.

5. **SCRIPTURE:** It is both the foundation of prayer and the means of testing all prophetic ministry.

THIS MEANS: The Bible is God’s self-disclosure. We cannot know Him truly nor intimately apart from Scripture. Our best prayer efforts are simply praying back God’s own word to Him. He loves that! Also, the knowledge, wisdom, and discernment that biblically taught people offer is essential. So says 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22. *“Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.”*

6. **LISTENING:** We want to grow in our ability to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Churches.

THIS MEANS: Prayer is a two-way conversation, in which we are wise to let Jesus take the lead. He promised to come into our hearts and churches and have supper with us in intimate conversation. Rev. 3:20 Jesus called the Holy Spirit the “Spirit of Truth,” Who would guide us into all the truth. John 16:13. Be open. Anticipate that the Spirit will reveal truth to us prophetically during listening prayer.

7. **SILENCE:** It is always appropriate and encouraged. Let Jesus lead you to His secret place - alone.

THIS MEANS: We allow each praying saint here to participate at any given time as the Spirit leads them. The microphone is not the only place, nor necessarily the primary place, that effective intercession is going on. Silent folks must be encouraged as well as the vocal ones. Sometimes, if we ask them at a free moment what they sense God is saying, they will tell us – with remarkable insight.

8. **SUBMISSION:** Mature people maintain control of their own spirits, allowing the Spirit to lead us.

THIS MEANS: The Spirit leads in an orderly way. There is a mistaken notion some folks have that when the Holy Spirit comes on them, they lose control, and that their ecstasy (ranting) somehow validates their spirituality. It does not. *“For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”* 1 Corinthians 14:31-33

9. **RESPECT:** While the microphone may be open, clarity and brevity will allow more to participate.

THIS MEANS: There is a fine balance between protecting the meeting and controlling the meeting. The Listening Team will from time to time reinforce that the microphone is open, encouraging shy people to step out and obey the prompting of the Spirit by leading in prayer or sharing an insight. At other times, the challenge will be to prevent someone dominating the meeting at the microphone. This will happen. The best remedy is usually just to pray. We should avoid embarrassing anyone publicly.

10. **FREEDOM:** Use the space to sit, stand, kneel, lay prostrate, dance, or move about as God prompts you.

THIS MEANS: A prayer session is a place to be real with God, to relate to Him with the whole person. It need not be stiff and formal. Jesus said, “Learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.” Body language can be appropriate when talking with God. Use it, but do not abuse it. The flesh can disguise itself as “Spirit.” So, be sensitive to others in the meeting. And just keep listening, team.