

Quotations for Reflection

Koinonia Reflection Group
Way of the Spirit 2021-2022

Listening in Koinonia

- 1.1 Open, attentive listening can be, in fact, a form of contemplative prayer. It can be that widest, most open form of being present and attentive, in trust that God is present with us, in expectancy that the Spirit will move in the hearts of those present and that we may be changed inwardly for the good or guided to be part of the upwelling of Life in the situation.
—*Patricia Loring*¹
- 1.2 To “listen” another’s soul into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be almost the greatest service that any human being ever performs for another. . . .For in penetrating to what is involved in listening do we not disclose the thinness of the filament that separates [people] listening openly to one another, and that of God intently listening to each soul? —*Douglas Steere*² (1901-1995)
- 1.3 [In a circle of trust] when we listen to another person’s problems, we do not leap to fix or save: we hold the tension to give that person space to hear his or her inner teacher. We learn to neither invade or evade the reality of each other’s lives but rather to find a third way of being present to each other. —*Parker Palmer*³
- 1.4 As we grow in our ability to listen this way, we give the gift of “hearing the other into speech.” As *our listening* becomes more open—speakers start to trust that they are being heard by people whose only desire is to make it safe for everyone to tell the truth—*their speaking* becomes more open as well. Like every gift given, this one returns as a gift to the giver: when we learn how to listen more deeply to others, we can listen more deeply to ourselves. This may be the most important result of the unconventional speaking and listening that go on in a circle of trust.
—*Parker Palmer*⁴

Speaking in Koinonia

- 1.5 People who can identify and articulate the moments of their inner lives, who can give names to their varied experiences, need no longer be victims of themselves, but are able slowly and consistently to remove the obstacles that prevent the Spirit from entering. They can create space for the One whose heart is greater than theirs, whose eyes see more than theirs, and whose hands can heal and form more than theirs. —*Henri Nouwen*⁵

¹ Loring, Patricia. *Listening spirituality: Personal Spiritual Practices...*, 163.

² Loring, Patricia . *Listening Spirituality Vol II: Corporate Spiritual Practice Among Friends*. 1999. Bethesda: Openings Press, 2009. Print, 149.

³ *Palmer, Parker J. A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey toward an Undivided Life: Welcoming the Soul and Weaving Community in a Wounded World. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004. Print, 182*

⁴ Palmer, 120-121.

⁵ Nouwen, Henri J. M., Michael J. Christensen, and Rebecca Laird. *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit*. New York: HarperOne, 2010. Print, xx.

1.6 Speaking of our experiences of God and of things of the Spirit helps to encourage them, validate them, and make them more real. Hearing other's experiences helps provide a language and open possibilities for each of us. It also encourages each of us to tackle the difficult, often painful inner work of clearing away the thoughts and habits that separate us from God.

— *Marty Grundy*⁶

1.7 In each and every conversation, whether it's unscheduled and ad hoc or a dialogue we've planned for weeks, we have a choice: we can conceal the truth of our hearts or we can reveal ourselves to others and speak from our hearts. Imagine a spectrum where at one end you are speaking from the shallows of your ego or your false self—about what you have, what you do, and what others think of you. At the other end, you are consistently speaking from the depth of your heart and trying to reveal your true self—what your dreams are, what you value, what gives your life purpose and meaning. In every encounter, whether or not we are aware of it or not, we navigate this tension between our limited self—our ego—and the fullness of our being—our soul.

— *Diane Millis*⁷

Responding in Koinonia

1.8 ...[a spiritual companion] relationship needs to have a sense of safety on the human level—a sense that the [person] will not violate my integrity. Such a sense of human safety, however, is a platform for a sense of *daring*, not timidity, with *God* in the [companioning] session—a sense of room where my desire and God's desire for an expansiveness of soul can live, even at the price of discomfort and disorientation on the ego level. — *Tilden Edwards*⁸

1.9 Factual information and analytical reflection may be useful in understanding a situation, but a different kind of awareness is often needed in order to become clear about the interior movements of the Spirit. Questions that evoke greater self-understanding help free a person to live most fully and authentically. Such questions seek to elicit the knowing that may lie below consciousness, or that may not have been articulated out loud before.

— *Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Spiritual Formation Working Group*⁹

1.10 Covenant groups [*like koinonia groups*] provide a place where questions and doubts can be raised in an environment of acceptance and trust, and where experiences and insights can be shared in such a way that new aspects of faith, belief and obedience to the Light within each person may be revealed... [Group participants] pledge to help each other grow spiritually through honest, loving communication. — *Carole Treadway and Liz Yeats*¹⁰

⁶ Grundy, Martha. "Guidelines for Starting a Small Group." Chena Ridge Friends Meeting, Fairbanks, Alaska, 1990's.

⁷ Millis, Diane M. *Conversation, the sacred art: practicing presence in an age of distraction*. Woodstock, Skylight Paths Publishing, 2013, 73.

⁸ Edwards, Tilden. "Immediate Givenness to God in the Spiritual Direction Relationship." *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* May 1995: 5-12. Print, 10-11.

⁹ "Evoking Questions for use in peer groups." *Quaker Spiritual Formation*, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Spiritual Formation Working Group, quakerspiritualformation.org/sf-2/evoking-questions/. Accessed 19 Oct. 2016.

¹⁰ Treadway, Carole, and Liz Yeats. "Covenant Groups." Friends General Conference, 1999. Part of *Fostering Vital Friends Meeting*, Part II. https://www.fgcquaker.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Covenant-Groups-FVFM_0.pdf

- 1.11 If I depend only on the evidence of the like-minded, I may waste my sprit in self justification, self-aggrandizement. I may also become stale, bored and boring in my spiritual life. That is why the other kind of companionship is so valuable... What I have in mind is what happens when we discover that there is no way that we can make our different words mean the same thing, without violating one another's integrity, yet in our separateness we share goodwill toward one another, a trust that we are each right to go our different ways. Such encounters with difference confirm each of us, at the same time confirming that we live in a world where profound differences are significant. —*Paul Lacey*¹¹ (*contemporary*)
- 1.12 Martin Buber speaks of humans trying to communicate with one another from different faith-perspectives in a lovely image: I stand in the doorway of my faith and greet others standing in the doorways of their faiths. The image reminds us that there is a space in between, which marks our separations but is also public space where all are free to meet and address one another. I may not presume to stand in the doorway of another's faith; I must wait for an invitation to enter. If I enter, it must be as a respectful seeker, not as a tourist sneering at what is unfamiliar. If I stand in my own doorway, I greet others, perhaps with some heart-sorrow that we must maintain some separations because our understanding, experience and integrity require that we stand where we are, but always with good will and gratitude for their witness. —*Paul Lacy*¹²
- 1.13 Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand, if there has been any slip or fall; and waiting till the Lord gives sense and repentance, if sense and repentance in any be wanting. Oh! wait to feel this spirit, and to be guided to walk in this spirit, that ye may enjoy the Lord in sweetness, and walk sweetly, meekly, tenderly, peaceably, and lovingly one with another. —*Isaac Penington, 1667*¹³

¹¹ Lacey, Paul. "Nourishing the Life of the Meeting: Finding Companionship." FWCC Section of the Americas: Home, Wider Quaker Fellowship Publications, www.fwccamericas.org/publications/wqf/2006_fall/nourish.shtml. Accessed 2012. Excerpted from *Nourishing the Spiritual Life* Published 1995 by Quaker Home Service, London, England

¹² Lacey, P. unpagued.

¹³ Penington, Isaac. "To Friends in Amersham (1667)." *Online Texts*. Quaker Heritage Press, n.d. Web. 5 Mar. 2012. <<http://www.qhpress.org/texts/penington/letter20.html>>.