

# Deep Listening

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Yellow Wagtail singing in a meadow

As the world grows increasingly divided politically, socially and ideologically, our ability to listen deeply seems to be fading. Conversations become battlegrounds, and understanding is replaced by the need to be right. In times like these, I find myself wondering what if Jesus was here? What Would Jesus do? How would he respond to the voices that seem so different from our own?

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus encounters people with vastly different beliefs. What makes Jesus' approach radical is his capacity to listen with compassion. He does not listen to

win an argument or to change someone's mind. He listens because every person carries the imprint of God and to listen to another is, in some way, to listen to God. If we applied this to our polarised world, how different would our conversations be? Could we sit with someone whose political beliefs we oppose and, rather than preparing our rebuttal, simply be curious and compassionate and have a sense of wonder about why this person experiences life so differently? Could we listen not to convert but to connect?

Deep listening is a foundational

aspect of my spiritual life, emphasising empathetic presence and connection not only to the divine but to all of creation. I feel a deep calling to be in nature; this receptivity is deeply felt through the ear of the heart. As someone with lived experience of hearing loss, this practice of listening with the heart takes on a profoundly nuanced meaning. I think of the wisdom of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, those early Christian hermits who sought solitude in the wilderness, embraced the wisdom of silence and understood that deep listening often happens without words. They understood that true connection is not found in shouting over one another but in holding space for difference, in listening not to react but to understand.

As tensions rise across the world, it is easy to despair. It is tempting to retreat into our echo chambers, convinced that those who think differently are beyond redemption. But Jesus never retreated. He stepped into the tension with love. Deep listening is an act of faith. It is a refusal to let fear dictate our relationships. It is a declaration that every person, no matter how different, is worthy of being heard. The Desert Fathers and Mothers withdrew from the chaos of society not to escape the world but to better understand it. Their wisdom reminds us that true listening begins with inner presence; God is in the silence, in the voices of those we struggle to understand. To really listen with presence is to rediscover what it truly means to find God in all things. Deep listening, like faith, is not about knowing every answer but trusting that God is present even in

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the question.

Nature itself is a teacher in the art of listening. It gently invites us to slow down, attune to our inner voice and be receptive to change. The river isn't afraid to flow; it moves in rhythm, trusting the pull of gravity, the unseen force that carries it forward. The flowers do not rush to bloom; they unfold patiently, trusting the wisdom of the seasons. The birds do not silence one another; they sing in harmony. If we're constantly at war within ourselves, how can we extend grace to others? What if we become less defensive and more patient? What if we stop seeing people as enemies and start seeing them as fellow wanderers in the desert of life, all of us in need of grace? What if we approach our divided world in the same way? Instead of seeing difference as a threat, we see it as part of the vast beauty of God's creation. What if, instead of reacting in fear or anger, we move with the patience of the tides, the wisdom of the trees and the harmony of birdsong? What if silence is more powerful than words? What if the sacred 'what if ...' is where faith truly resides?