

## LISTENING AND ASKING QUESTIONS: 20 PRACTICAL TIPS

Proverbs 20:5 | Geldart | 2025/3/16 | Tru Community Church

1. Connect Cards & Giving

2. Announcements

a. Luau

b. Pizza with the Pastors

### 3. Reaching out with Mission

a. We've been hitting it hard the last few weeks.

b. Looking at the clear unavoidable call for us to view church and mission differently than many of us have been taught or experienced.

c. Where the work of ministry is done by ALL THE REGULAR CHURCH PPL

i. And the leaders' job is to equip and encourage every believer to reach out on mission

ii. About how we're called to love our neighbor and engage them with practical love and RELATIONSHIP

#### d. AT ITS ROOT: Ministry is RELATIONAL

i. Happens during conversations

ii. Over the fence

iii. Over salami sandwiches

iv. Over a broken starter

v. Over coffee

#### e. Conversations in the context of genuine relationships

4. SO, today we're going to do something a little different, and look at how we can increase our skills for this.

### 5. Today we're talking about Listening & Asking Questions

a. Both actual listening (we're all so addicted to talking and thinking about what we're going to say next)

b. And active listening – drawing out ppl's hearts with for deeper conversations that can bear the weight of truth.

c. Listening SO THAT we can ask good questions that help draw out their hearts.

6. **Proverbs 20:5** - *The purpose in a person's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.*

7. Jesus was a master at this. He was constantly talking to people and asking them questions. Making them feel seen and loved. And also how to speak straight to their hearts about what they're faced with and what God's calling them to.

8. **James 1:19-20** - <sup>19</sup> My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, <sup>20</sup> because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

9. **Proverbs 18:13** - *To answer before listening — that is folly and shame.*

10. **Colossians 4:6** <sup>6</sup> Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

11. **Philippians 2:3-4**<sup>3</sup> *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,* <sup>4</sup> *not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*
12. Increasing our active listening and conversation skills are not only a MEANS to communicating the love of God to others, BUT ARE also ACTUALLY the Good work of loving others itself! Most of people's struggles and issues can be deeply engaged within our community of faith.
13. We want to help equip all of us to wisely and effectively handle one another's hearts with both grace and competency, to help them both heal and grow.
14. Toward that end, here I'm going to share 20 Listening & Conversation tips to help as you engage with others below the surface – to the Glory of God and the blessing of our neighbors!:

### **20 PRACTICAL TIPS: An illustrative conversation with Emma and Brenna:**

**Setting:** *A cozy neighborhood coffee shop with the hum of conversation and clinking cups in the background. Emma and Brenna have just ordered their drinks and are sitting by a large window, sunlight filtering through. Emma and Brenna went to school together and now live in the name neighborhood in Saint George. It's been a while since they've had a real chance to connect.*

**Emma is you!** She's going to graciously show us many common but unhelpful ways to respond to various things Brenna shares and does. Each will give us an opportunity to see how we could apply one of the tips, and then we'll let Emma get it right! Be kind to her. Remember, she's you!

#### **Intro:**

**Emma:** *[Settling into her chair, smiling warmly]*

"It's so good to see you, Brenna. I've missed this—a chance to just sit and talk without all the chaos of life getting in the way. It feels like forever since we've had a chance to catch up like this."

**Brenna:** *[Stirring her coffee distractedly]*

"Yeah, it's been a while, hasn't it? Things have just been... a lot lately. It's like I blinked and suddenly everything feels overwhelming."

**Emma:** *[Gently, leaning forward]*

"I get that. It feels like everyone's juggling so much these days. It's easy to get lost in the chaos. How have you been holding up? What's been going on with you lately?"

**Brenna:** *[Shrugs, trying to smile but not quite managing]*

"Honestly? It depends on the day. Some days are okay, but most of the time it feels like I'm barely keeping my head above water. I don't even know how I've made it this far."

**Emma:** *[Her face showing genuine concern, leaning in slightly, her tone steady and sincere]*

"That sounds exhausting, Brenna. I'm so sorry you've been feeling that way. What's been weighing on you the most? What feels hardest right now?"

**Brenna:** *[Takes a deep breath, her hands wrapping around her warm cup for comfort. After a moment's hesitation, she speaks, her voice tinged with vulnerability]* "I don't even know where to start. It feels like everything is falling apart—my job, my friendships, even my marriage. I feel so lost. It's like everything I thought I had under control is slipping away."

*A common but Unhelpful response would be something like:*

**Emma:** "Oh, you'll figure it out. You've always managed to bounce back before."

*Why this is unhelpful:* This dismisses Brenna's pain and skips over the opportunity to ask meaningful questions or genuinely listen.

**Tip 1: Listen and ask questions** - Bring great curiosity. What is God up to? There is great power in your mere presence. In paying attention. In asking, "Can you tell me more about that?"

*So, when Brenna says:*

"I feel so lost. It's like everything I thought I had under control is slipping away."

*A more helpful response could be something like:*

**Emma:** *[Her brows furrowing in concern, she leans forward just a little more, her tone steady and gentle]*

"That sounds really hard, Brenna. Can you tell me more about what's been happening? I'm here to listen—whatever it is, I want to hear it."

**Brenna:** *[Her words spilling out, almost as though she's been holding them in for too long]* "It's just been one thing after another, you know? Like this avalanche I can't stop. Before I can even deal with one thing, the next hits me, and it just keeps coming."

*Unhelpful response:*

**Emma:** *[Looking at her phone as it buzzes on the table. Then impulsively picks it up and starts tapping.]*

"Mm-hmm, wow. That sounds crazy. Hold on, I just need to reply to this text real quick."

*Why this is unhelpful:* Dividing your attention makes Brenna feel undervalued and unimportant.

**Tip 2: Give them your complete attention** - Don't check your phone. Don't text. Don't take a call. Don't be doing laundry or cleaning the house. Sit down with them. Look them in the eyes. Don't just be thinking of what you'll say next. Be present and respond appropriately with verbal and nonverbal affirmation. Don't be afraid to ask clarifying questions (but not TOO many). This shows your interest. Pay attention to your nonverbal. Lean forward. Don't lean back or cross your arms. Don't interrupt.

So when **Brenna** says

"It's just been one thing after another, you know? Like this avalanche I can't stop."

*A more helpful response would be:*

**Emma:** [Puts her phone facedown on the table, maintaining eye contact]

"I can see how overwhelming that must feel. That constant, piling pressure—it's no wonder you feel like it's too much. What's been weighing on you the most lately? Maybe talking about it will help lighten the load."

**Brenna:** [Her voice trembling slightly, staring into her coffee cup]

"I feel like I'm failing at everything. I even yelled at my kids last night—I couldn't take it anymore. I'm awful."

*Unhelpful response:*

**Emma:** "Don't be so hard on yourself. Everyone yells at their kids sometimes—it's not a big deal."

*Why this is unhelpful:* This downplays Brenna's feelings and fails to make her feel seen or understood.

**Tip 3: Validate their feelings** - No matter the rightness of the REASONS for their feelings... they ARE feeling hurt (or sad or afraid, etc). So it really helps them feel seen and valued to validate their FEELINGS. Often this must be done FIRST before being able to talk more deeply about details or root issues.

So when **Brenna** says:

"I feel like I'm failing at everything. I even yelled at my kids last night—I couldn't take it anymore. I'm awful."

*A better response:*

**Emma:** [Her voice calm and empathetic, leaning in slightly to show she's really listening]

"Brenna, it sounds like you're feeling overwhelmed and disappointed in yourself. Thank you for sharing that with me. What you're feeling makes total sense, and it's okay to feel that way."

**Brenna:** [Tears welling up, her voice thick with emotion]

"I don't even know where to start. Everything is just falling apart."

*Poor response:*

**Emma:** "Oh, I know how that feels! Last month I had so much going on at work, and my car broke down. I totally get it."

*Why this is unhelpful:* This shifts the focus away from Brenna and her struggles, making her feel dismissed.

**Tip 4: Don't quickly identify** - Don't show how you know what that's like or how something similar happened to you. It feels natural. And it IS appropriate in some settings. But if you want people to feel safe opening up, it typically doesn't help. It effectively takes the focus OFF of them, their story, their hurt, etc... and puts it on you. And it even subtly dismisses their situation by making them feel unseen and invalidated.

So when **Brenna** says:

"I don't even know where to start. Everything is just falling apart."

Better response:

**Emma:** *[Pausing briefly]*

"I'd love to hear more about what's been going on with you, Brenna. This time is about you—I want to understand what you're experiencing. It's okay to take your time."

**Brenna:** *[Her voice dropping to a whisper, the words coming hesitantly]*

"I've even thought about just disappearing. Like, would anyone even notice if I was gone?"

Poor response:

**Emma:** *[Gasps, her voice sharp and shocked]* "Oh my gosh! I can't believe you'd think something like that. That's terrible."

*Why this is unhelpful:* Reacting with shock can make Brenna feel judged and unsafe to share further.

**Tip 5: Don't communicate surprise at what they share** - You can feel it inside, but don't share it. Shock or disgust will cause them to feel unsafe. A Biblical view of sin and grace enables this. Because of the rampant effects of sin, we should never really be surprised at what depths of sin people share with us (or indeed what we find in ourselves). And yet grace and the Gospel gives us the freedom to engage with these people with grace and acceptance because we know how much we've been forgiven and the depths of the grace available from God. Acceptance at this stage can lay critical foundation work for helping them embrace the Gospel.

So when **Brenna** says:

"I've even thought about just disappearing. Like, would anyone even notice if I was gone?"

Better response:

**Emma:** *[Keeping a calm expression]*

"That's a really heavy feeling to carry, Brenna. Thank you for trusting me enough to share that. It's brave of you to speak those words out loud, and I'm so glad you did. It doesn't make me view you any differently."

**Brenna:** *[Her voice softening, a flicker of relief in her tone]*

"That's honestly really hard for me to admit."

*Wrong response:*

**Emma:** "Well, it's about time you talked to someone about it!"

*Why this is unhelpful:* This response lacks gratitude or sensitivity, potentially discouraging further openness.

**Tip 6: THANK them for sharing that with you** - Consider it a high honor, a gift even. Know this, it really is. The more you engage with people's hearts, the more you begin to see that seeing inside the secret thoughts and hearts of eternal souls, beings made in the image of God himself.... IS a truly high honor. So just go ahead and say it.

So when **Brenna** says:

"That's honestly really hard for me to admit."

*Better response:*

**Emma:** [Her voice warm and filled with sincerity] "I'm honored you'd trust me with that, Brenna. Thank you. I don't take that lightly, and I'm here for you."

**Brenna:** [Her voice soft and trembling her gaze fixed on the table]  
"I've been skipping meals and just feeling drained all the time."

*Wrong response:*

**Emma:** "Oh, you'll feel better once you get over this. Just try to stay positive!"

*Why this is unhelpful:* It ignores practical concerns like Brenna's physical well-being, which may need urgent attention.

**Tip 7: Address presenting issues if needed** - Some presenting issues DO need to be dealt with first before further progress (toward Christ or even general health) can be made. Deeply depressed people need to take initial steps of dealing with their depression...especially the physical effects that can hinder their ability to actually be able to engage with the issues beneath their depression. Medications here can often be the right first step (but always with an eye toward them seeing that their deepest need is for Christ). Other issues of safety must often be addressed first. One giving or receiving abuse must usually remove themselves from the situation for a while. Addicts must get sober.

- Be aware of how multi-faceted people's issues are – our biological, mental and spiritual faculties were all deeply broken as a result of the fall.
- Help people get out of crisis mode so they can move towards maturity in the Gospel.

So when **Brenna** says:

"I've been skipping meals and just feeling drained all the time."

*Better response:*

**Emma:** *[Her expression softening with concern, leaning forward slightly]*

"Brenna, that sounds like so much to be carrying. Skipping meals and feeling drained can really take a toll on you, even more than you might realize. Maybe we can start by looking into some simple steps to help you feel a little more stable physically. Have you been able to eat anything at all today?"

**Brenna:** *[Shakes her head slightly, her voice barely audible]*

"No... not really. I just didn't have the energy to even think about food. It's like everything feels too much right now."

**Emma:** *[Nods gently, her tone remaining calm and supportive]*

"I get that—it's hard to focus on anything when you're feeling this overwhelmed. How about this—after we finish our coffee, why don't we go grab something small to eat together? Even just a little can help give you the strength to keep going."

**Brenna:** *[Looks up for the first time, her expression hesitant but touched]*

"You'd do that with me?"

**Emma:** *[Smiling warmly]*

"Of course. You're not in this alone, Brenna. We can take things one small step at a time."

**Brenna:** *[Sighs, running her fingers through her hair]*

"I don't even know where to begin fixing this mess."

*Wrong response:*

**Emma:** "You should probably just make a list and organize everything you need to get done. Then just do it."

*Why this is unhelpful:* Jumping to solutions skips over the deeper story and emotions beneath Brenna's struggles.

**Tip 8: Ask yourself key questions** - *Learn to ask yourselves some key questions while they're sharing.* They usually point to important things:

- a. Always be curious about the story BENEATH the story. What is REALLY at the bottom of what's going on... even if the person sharing it doesn't know themselves. What you see is not always what you get. The presenting issues may just be the tip of the iceberg...
- b. Not only what they're saying, but what they're meaning.
- c. And what do you wonder.
- d. What jumped out to you?

- e. Where did the person seem most connected or energetic?
- f. What emotions keep coming up in them?
- g. What emotions keep coming up in YOU?
- h. Where did you feel bored?
- i. Do you feel pressure to anything?
- j. Do you feel like you are having to work really hard to carry the conversation?

So when **Brenna** says:

"I don't even know where to begin fixing this mess."

*Better response:*

**Emma:** "It sounds like everything feels tangled and too much right now. Even hearing about it makes me feel the knot of it all. Let's just focus on one thing at a time. We can untangle it together."

**Brenna:** "You probably think I'm awful. I mean, I can't even keep it together for my kids."

*Wrong response:*

**Emma:** "Awful? Not at all—But I can't really relate. I would never let my life get that chaotic. I'm actually doing really well. Let me tell you how I do it."

*Why this is unhelpful:* This comes across as judgmental and could make Brenna feel more inadequate.

**Tip 9: Share your struggles, not your strengths** - In general, if you share anything about yourself, paint yourself in a negative light. Share about how you failed at something. Or how you made a mess of your life. This helps them put down their guard against you being "holier than them" -- which, on your own, apart from Christ, you're surely not!

So when **Brenna** says:

"You probably think I'm awful. I mean, I can't even keep it together for my kids."

*Better response:*

**Emma:** *[Leaning forward, her tone soft and empathetic]*

"Brenna, I don't think you're awful at all. I've made so many mistakes as a mom too—there were nights I went to bed feeling like I'd failed everyone. Moments when I thought I was beyond repair. But you know what? There's grace for us, even when we don't see it. We don't have to have it all together."

**Brenna:** *[Her eyes welling up, she hesitates before speaking]* "I feel like nobody cares about me."



*Wrong response:*

**Emma:** "Oh, come on. That's not true. People care about you—you're just being dramatic."

*Why this is unhelpful:* This dismisses Brenna's feelings and may make her feel even lonelier and unimportant.

**Tip 10: Communicate your love and acceptance of them** - When at all possible, communicate your love and acceptance of them. But this must be REAL. People can smell fakery. Pray for this kind of heart. It paves the way for them to think they could approach God this way, and be accepted likewise.

So when **Brenna** says:

"I feel like nobody cares about me."

*Better response:*

**Emma:** [Reaches out, her tone warm and steady]

"Brenna, I want you to know I care about you so much. Nothing you could say or feel would ever change that. You are deeply valued. I see you, even when you feel invisible."

**Brenna:** [Wipes at her eyes, her voice breaking]

"I feel guilty about yelling at my kids. I just feel like I'm a terrible mom."

*Wrong response:*

**Emma:** "Well, yeah, maybe you shouldn't yell so much."

*Why this is unhelpful:* This response adds to Brenna's guilt rather than helping her feel understood.

**Tip 11: Resist the OVERWHELMING urge to quickly give advice.** This is actually NOT helpful. If we were fixing a Buick, maybe. But NOT when we're engaging with people's stories and hearts. For many of us, especially guys, this is the most difficult and important tip!

**Tip 12: Reflect back what you hear them saying** - "So what I hear from you is that you're feeling \_\_\_\_\_ because of \_\_\_\_\_. Is that right?" This not only helps you check your assumptions, but also helps them know you're paying attention.

So when **Brenna** says:

"I feel guilty about yelling at my kids. I just feel like I'm a terrible mom."

*Better response*

**Emma:** [Leaning back slightly, her voice gentle and measured]

"So what I hear you saying is that you're feeling a lot of guilt over yelling, and that guilt is making you question your abilities as a mom. Is that right?"

**Brenna:** *[Nods slowly, her voice subdued]*

"Yah. I just need to try harder. Work harder, be better."

*Wrong response:*

**Emma:** "Exactly! God helps those who help themselves."

*Why this is unhelpful:* This reinforces a performance-based mindset rather than pointing Brenna to grace and deeper transformation through Christ.

**Tip 13: Remember, their *GREATEST* need is for Jesus.** It is our secret goal to help them see this. But it often takes lots of time, patience, wisdom, and care to get there. We must often employ subversive tactics. Be patient. Be prayerful. And don't think it's up to you to be their savior or be extremely knowledgeable.

**Tip 14: Beware of offering them mere moralism or legalism** - Beware of the temptation to offer them mere moralism or legalism. This point flows from the previous point. The real hope for this person is NOT merely that they'd get their career back on track, or save their marriage, or quit looking at porn or sleeping around or getting drunk. The real hope for them is NOT merely ultimate restoration of relationship with their children or friend. Or for them to find a way out of their financial troubles. So we need to be VERY WARY of helping them "do better." THIS IS DEVILISHLY EASY TO SLIP INTO.

So when **Brenna** says:

"I just need to try harder. Work harder, be better."

*Better response:*

**Emma:** *[Her tone steady, speaking with kindness]*

"I think there's more to it than just trying harder, Brenna. God's grace meets us in our weakness, not in our perfection. It's not about working your way to feeling okay—it's about letting yourself be loved even in the mess."

**Brenna:** *[Hesitant, her voice barely audible]*

"But what if I'm just not good enough for God to want me?"

*Wrong response:*

**Emma:** "Oh, Brenna, how can you say that? Of course you're good enough! The Bible says in Romans 3:23 says that all have sinned, but... Ephesians 2:8-9 makes it clear—it's by grace you've been saved through faith, not by works, so you don't have to earn it. And what about Romans 8:38-39? Nothing—nothing!—can separate us from the love of God. Not your doubts, not your mistakes—*nothing!* Oh, and think about Luke 15:4-7—Jesus leaves the ninety-nine sheep just to find the one that's lost! That's *you*, Brenna! God is chasing after you. And John 3:16? God so loved the world—that's *you*, too—that He sent His only Son! How can you question this? I mean, Isaiah

41:10 literally says, 'Do not fear, for I am with you.' And in Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus says, 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.' ! Psalm 139:14 says you are fearfully and wonderfully made. And Jeremiah 29:11—don't you see? He has plans for you, Brenna! Plans to prosper you, not to harm you and Honestly, Brenna, if you really understood all of this, you wouldn't even *need* to question if you're good enough!"

*Why this is unhelpful:* This is an excellent theological overview of this topic and use of supporting scriptures. Unfortunately, overloading Brenna with scripture too early can feel impersonal or pushy.

**Tip 15: Avoid throwing Bible verses at them** – In most situations, tossing out a bunch of Bible verses is counterproductive and makes people feel judged and missed. Like you're trying to tell them how to fix themselves. What's more, this approach USUALLY at its core borders on moralism or legalism – ironic, huh? Also, people often have great baggage with religious people not caring for their hearts, so it's best to tread lightly here, at least at first. But don't shy away from sharing biblical TRUTH – especially in context appropriate, non-churchy language. This frankly shows that you truly KNOW Scripture... not that you can parrot back verse references, but that the Word truly LIVES in your heart. "The right thing at the wrong time is the wrong thing."

So when **Brenna** says:

"But what if I'm just not good enough for God to want me?"

*Better response:*

**Emma:** [Her voice soft, her expression tender]

"Brenna, I hear you. I've felt like that too, like nothing I could ever do would be enough. Can I share something I've been learning? It's not about being 'good enough'—it's about how much God loves you right where you are. That love doesn't depend on your worthiness; it's already there."

**Brenna:** [Her voice trembling]

"Yeah, but what if nothing ever gets better? Seems more likely it's just going to keep getting worse."

*Wrong response:*

**Emma:** "What can I say, it might not. But that's just life sometimes."

*Why this is unhelpful:* This response shuts down hope and leaves Brenna feeling stuck rather than offering a vision for a brighter future.

**Tip 16: Offer them hope** - Offer the person HOPE – a vision for what you think their life could look like if they move forward (on a path towards Christ). Communicate this vision and hope to them. Make it specific and concrete. Often this will require you to get the vision yourself intentionally.

Picture the person perfect. Redeemed. Whole and fully alive. Pure and Holy. Mature and complete in Christ. This takes practice. But it is VITAL.

So when **Brenna** says:

"But what if nothing ever gets better? Seems more likely it's just going to keep getting worse."

Better response:

**Emma:** *[Her tone filled with quiet conviction]*

"It can feel that way when you're in the thick of it, like the dark will never lift. But I believe there's a future where you feel free and whole again, Brenna. You don't have to do this alone—there's so much more waiting for you."

**Brenna:** *[Her voice trembling, barely audible]*

"Don't tell anyone I said this, but sometimes I wonder if it would just be easier if I wasn't here."

Wrong response:

**Emma:** "Oh, don't say that! You're just being dramatic. Stop being so dark. Things will get better eventually."

*Why this is unhelpful:* Dismissing a serious statement like this could leave Brenna without the urgent care she needs.

**Tip 17: Address serious threats immediately** - Some things are "deal breakers." If someone tells you they're going to kill themselves or harm others, you have to believe them. No matter the context (within reason) you dignify them by believing them and bringing in the appropriate authorities or caregivers. Suicide threats must be dealt with by taking them to a mental health facility like Pawnee Mental Health, to the ER or calling an ambulance. Threats to others must be reported to the police. This is NOT being dishonest or disloyal by breaking confidence. You were obligated out of care to respond seriously.

So when **Brenna** says:

"Don't tell anyone I said this, but sometimes I wonder if it would just be easier if I wasn't here."

Better response:

**Emma:** *[Leans in slightly, her tone serious but calm, her eyes filled with concern]*

"Brenna, that really worries me. Thank you for trusting me enough to say that out loud. I'm so glad you told me. You don't have to face these feelings on your own—let's find someone together who can help right now. You're not alone in this, and I don't want you to carry this alone."

**Brenna:** *[Tears streaming down her face, her words shaky]*

"I don't know if I can do this without you. You're the only one I trust."

*Wrong response:*

**Emma:** "I'll always be here, no matter what. You can depend on me. We can fix this."

*Why this is unhelpful:* Creating dependency puts an unsustainable weight on Emma and misses the opportunity to involve others in supporting Brenna.

**Tip 18: Don't hold their rope alone** - Some people can knowingly or unknowingly tie a rope around their waists, hand you one end, and then jump off a bridge. Then, dangling there they beg you not to let go. This is manipulation and dependency. And it is DANGEROUS. You're not anyone's savior. And you can't bear the weight of holding someone's heart alone for long. Always be looking for ways to involve others (usually just one extra person to start). And don't be afraid to confer with other leaders if you feel unsure. Push back on confidentiality. It takes a village...

So when **Brenna** says:

"I don't know if I can do this without you. You're the only one I trust."

*Better response:*

**Emma:** [Reaches out to gently touch Brenna's arm, her voice steady but firm]

"Brenna, I want to walk with you through this. I'm willing to be part of your team—you don't have to face this alone. But I also think we should bring a few others into this journey, people who can help shoulder the load. Maybe a counselor and another friend you trust. What do you think? Can you think of anyone you'd feel comfortable involving?"

**Brenna:** [Takes a deep breath, as though the weight has lifted slightly]

"Yeah, I guess I could tell Becky, my sister. And... I've never seen a counselor before, but if you help me find someone, I think I'd be willing to give it a try. I'm just so tired of feeling this way."

*Wrong response:*

**Emma:** "You just need to trust Jesus more, and then you wouldn't feel like this."

*Why this is unhelpful:* This sounds dismissive and over-simplistic, potentially alienating Brenna rather than drawing her toward Christ.

**Tip 19: Look for strategic opportunities to point them toward Jesus.** This one is so important it's worth a near-repeat of #13. Remember that their deepest needs are for Jesus, and only in Him will they ever become fully alive, fulfilled, happy, healthy, loved, healed, accepted, etc... So prayerfully look for opportunities to speak of Jesus and point them to Christ.

So when **Brenna** says:

"I'm just so tired of feeling this way."

*Better response:*

**Emma:** *[Leaning slightly forward, her voice gentle and encouraging]*

"I hear you, Brenna. That kind of tiredness can feel impossible to carry on your own. You know, I've found a kind of rest that's deeper than just sleeping or even taking time off. It's been in knowing Jesus loves me, even when I'm a mess—especially when I'm a mess. If you'd like, I'd love to share more about that when you're ready."

**Brenna:** "I appreciate that, Emma. Really. I think I'm starting to get hungry. Can we go grab something now?"

As Emma walks home after her conversation with Brenna, she thanks God for being present and giving her a chance to care for Brenna. She also asks God to take care of Brenna and lead her to see how much he loves her. Then Emma reflects on how important it is to be ready for moments like these. She decides to look into some practical resources—a book on supporting loved ones with mental health challenges and a podcast that dives into emotional and spiritual care. Emma also plans to reach out to her pastor for advice and recommendations on equipping classes. She knows that the better prepared she is, the more helpful she can be in future conversations, and she wants to steward Brenna's trust well.

**Tip 20: Equip yourself** - Look into some basic books, equipping classes, or podcasts about counseling – specifically personal issues. Learn to spot basic and common mental illnesses, relational dysfunctions, and emotional states like depression.

- *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands* by Paul Tripp
- [\*Soul Talk: The Language God Longs for Us to Speak\*](#) by Larry Crabb
- [\*Understanding People: Why We Long for Relationship\*](#) by Larry Crabb
- [\*Redeeming Heartache: How Past Suffering Reveals Our True Calling\*](#) by Dan Allender
- [\*Unwanted: How Sexual Brokenness Reveals Our Way to Healing\*](#) by Jay Stringer
- [\*Finding Quiet: My Story of Overcoming Anxiety and the Practices that Brought Peace\*](#) by J.P. Moreland
- [\*The Place We Find Ourselves\*](#) podcast by Adam Young
- [\*Pure Desire Ministries\*](#) podcast
- *The Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation website has a lot of resources to offer. Check it out here: [www.ccef.org](http://www.ccef.org)*
- Know about the resources in our community like Pawnee Mental Health Services *Mental Health First Aid* 12-hour course. ([www.pawnee.org](http://www.pawnee.org))
- **FINDING HELP:**
  - For those looking to find a counselor in our area, use this website: [mhkmentalhealth.org](http://mhkmentalhealth.org)
  - The **Pawnee Crisis Stabilization Unit** can be contacted 24/7, 365. Call Pawnee at **800-609-2002** or for non-emergency calls 785-587-4302. Anyone at any age experiencing a mental health crisis can come directly to the Crisis Stabilization Unit for a walk-in assessment between the hours of 8am and 10pm. (**1558 Hayes Drive Suite A, Manhattan, KS 66502**). Those 18 years of age and older may be

considered for care in the Crisis Stabilization Unit for ongoing assistance if they meet criteria and there are openings.

- The [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) is the new three-digit dialing code that will route callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (now known as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline), and is now active across the United States. (Please note, the previous 1-800-273-TALK (8255) number will continue to function indefinitely)
- Those who are uncomfortable with speaking on the phone can text "MHA" to 741741 to speak with a trained crisis counselor at [Crisis Text Line](#).
- The [Child-Help USA](#) 1.800.4.A.CHILD (1.800.422.4453) crisis line assists both child and adult survivors of abuse, including sexual abuse. The hotline, staffed by mental health professionals, also provides treatment referrals.

## **Everyone clap for Emma and Brenna!**

### **Wrapup:**

Remember, the foundation of the ministry you're each called to is RELATIONAL. And so growing in our skills as Spirit filled conversationalists is an essentially spiritual practice and a core aspect of Christian lives. And as with most things, practice makes progress (not perfect). Progress. Good Works. Neighbors made in God's image engaged with the love and hope of Jesus. Through you.

### **Application:**

- 1) Consider which one or two tips you would like to try. Which you'd like to grow in.
- 2) Practice!

### **\*\*\*If time: Q&A:**

*How have you experienced the truth of one or more of these active listening conversation tips?*

*What's one do you want to grow in?*

*What stories can you share about how God led you into this kind of holy listening conversation with someone?*

*What question(s) still remain?*

### **Communion**

We can reach out with love to others like this, because Jesus has already done that first with us. He moved into the neighborhood, willingly entered into relationships, into awkward situations, so that they could be shown the love and heart of God.



# REACHING OUT WITH MISSION





# LISTENING & ASKING QUESTIONS



# PROVERBS 20:5

The purpose in a person's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.



# JAMES 1:19-20

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.



# PROVERBS 18:13

To answer before listening— that is folly and shame.





# COLOSSIANS 4:6

Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.



# PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.



# 20 PRACTICAL TIPS

with Emma and Brenna



# TIP 1

Listen and ask questions.





## TIP 2

Give them your complete attention.



## TIP 3

Validate their feelings.



## TIP 4

Don't quickly identify.



## TIP 5

Don't communicate surprise at what they share.



## TIP 6

Thank them for sharing that with you.





## TIP 7

Address presenting issues if needed.



## TIP 8

# Ask yourself key questions while they share.

What's the story beneath the story?

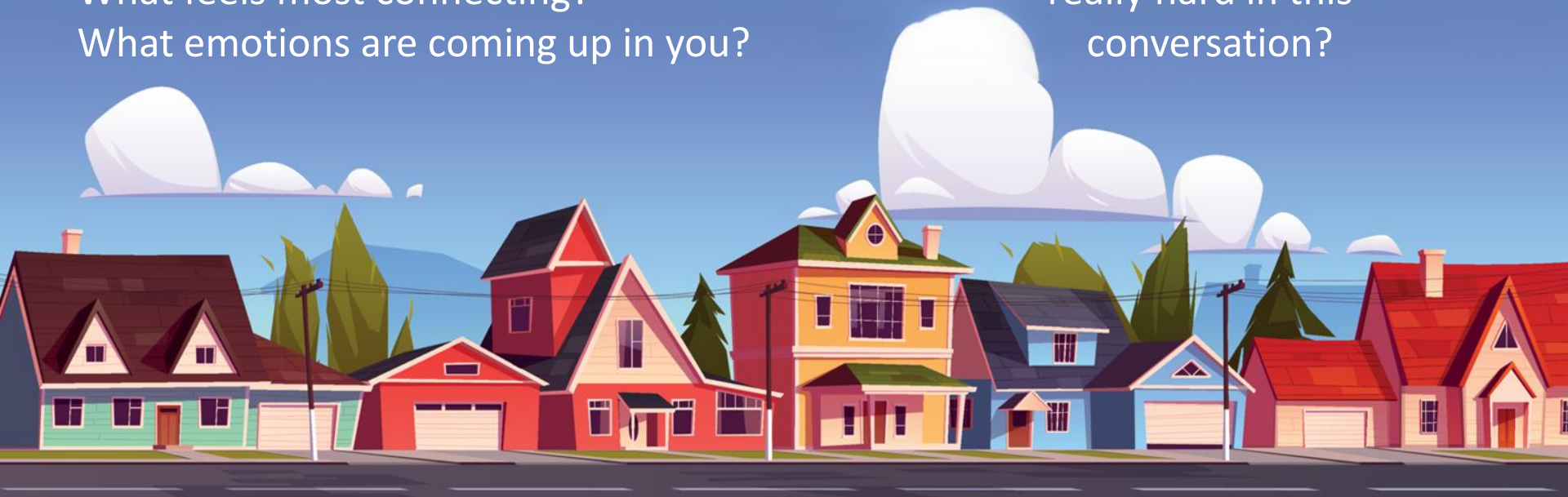
What do you wonder?

What feels most connecting?

What emotions are coming up in you?

Do I feel pressure to do anything?

Do I feel like I'm having to work  
really hard in this  
conversation?



## TIP 9

Share your struggles, not your strengths.





## TIP 10

Communicate your love and acceptance of them.



## TIP II

Resist the overwhelming urge to give advice.



## TIP 12

Reflect back what you hear them saying.



## TIP 13

Remember, their greatest need is for Jesus.



## TIP 14

Beware of offering them mere moralism or legalism.





## TIP 15

Avoid throwing Bible verses at them.



## TIP 16

Offer them hope.



## TIP 17

Address serious threats immediately.





## TIP 18

Don't hold their rope alone.



## TIP 19

Look for strategic opportunities to point them toward Jesus.



# TIP 20

Equip yourself.



# APPLICATIONS

- 1) Consider a few tips you'd like to try/grow in.
- 2) Practice!





# QUESTIONS COMMENTS TESTIMONIES

1. How have you experienced the truth of one or more of these active listening conversation tips?
2. What's one do you want to grow in?
3. What stories can you share about how God led you into this kind of holy listening conversations?
4. What questions still remain?



# COMMUNION

