

Community Engagement – National Nurses Month
The Healing Found in Listening and Being Heard

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As nurses and as men and women of faith, we are called to care not only for those in our personal care, but for our communities as well. That call to care has been difficult especially considering these long months of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing racial unrest present within our nation. We have experienced ongoing separation and isolation and have witnessed increasing amounts of stress, violence, physical, spiritual, and mental health challenges in our communities.

Quarantines, travel restrictions, face masks, social distancing, online learning, visitor restrictions, and virtual meetings became commonplace as our communities for worship moved online. Disconnection continues to be felt in small communities and in large cities alike as gaps widen following episodes of violence, destruction of property, and increasing polarities over continuing racial disparities. We want to be seen. We want to be heard.

How do we promote connection within our personal communities of family as well as our places of worship and local neighborhoods? How do we impact the professional communities where we work and the larger profession of nursing? As you read through the following verses and discussion questions, be open to the ways God may be leading.

Hearing the Word

⁹ Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their labor:

¹⁰ If either of them falls down,
one can help the other up.

But pity anyone who falls
and has no one to help them up.

¹¹ Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.
But how can one keep warm alone?

¹² Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

(Ecclesiastes 4: 9 - 12, NIV)

Responding to the Word

Read through these verses in Ecclesiastes a second time. Take time to process with at least

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one other person the following questions:

- As men and women, we often value being able to do things independently. What do these verses tell us about having this type of perspective?
- What are the examples of the advantages of living in community with others from these verses?
- Verse 12 creates a beautiful word picture of a strong, braided rope reminding us that “a cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” How does God work in our lives as a source of strength?

Application

The stresses of our lives can affect us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. One of the major lessons from this past year has been our need for connection and community. We are asking difficult questions of ourselves and of God. Many of us are rediscovering the value of simple things. We have also been able to experience healing and provide healing in the lives of others as we pause to intentionally listen to each other.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a pastor who was martyred for his work as part of the Nazi resistance, wrote about the power of listening in community in his book *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*. Bonhoeffer shared:

The first service one owes to others in a community involves listening to them. Just as our love for God begins with listening to God’s Word, the beginning of love for others is learning to listen to them. God’s love for us is shown by the fact that God not only gives God’s Word, but also lends us God’s ear. We do God’s work for our brothers and sisters when we learn to listen to them.

- What challenges or barriers do we experience when listening to others?
- What steps can we take to become better listeners to the needs of others? Consider specific examples that are a part of your personal and professional lives.
- Who do you have in your life that you can share your frustrations, pain or loss with? How do we begin to cultivate these deeper relationships with others?
- How do we create space to listen to those we may not agree with?

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- How do we begin to trust God when we don't understand what is happening around us or when we experience deep loss or pain?

Listening to others can be an intentional act of love that both builds and deepens community with others. It opens doors to greater understanding and creates space for healing and reconciliation. Listening is an important first step that demonstrates God's love.

Note: If you would like to connect and have deeper community with others, please contact us at nfc@intervarsity.org and let us know of your desire to be a part of student or nurse group. If a group does not exist in your area, we'd be happy to share with you how to start a group and to pray for God's leading in your next steps.



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