

# PART IV: Mind reading, Expectations, and Listening

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## READ THIS OVERVIEW

Have you ever made an assumption about someone without verifying the facts?

Imagine that your friend, who usually returns your texts, doesn't return your text one day. 1 hour, 2 hours, and eventually a whole day goes by, and you've started to wonder if they're angry with you. Maybe they're ignoring you. They probably saw your text and chose not to reply. You assume the worst.

Or have you ever had an expectation that wasn't met?

Imagine it's your birthday. And one of your friends, who got you a present last year, didn't get you a present this year. No card, no gift. You expected a present or at least some acknowledgement from them, so you're pretty disappointed. You begin to wonder if they are selfish, if they don't care about you, or if they aren't as close of a friend as you thought. You had an expectation (whether you realized it or not), and it wasn't met.

All of us, if we're not careful, play the role of mind-reader and make assumptions about the motivations behind people's behavior. And most of the time, if we're not careful, those assumptions tend to be negative. We spiral downward by negatively interpreting the behavior of another and making assumptions about what they're thinking. These interpretations and assumptions turn into landmines in relationships that, if not addressed, will hurt you and the other person. Further, all of us are prone to have expectations that might not have been communicated, agreed upon, or reasonable. We may not even realize we *have* these expectations.

If we're going to learn to love God and others, we have to fight against our tendency to mind read, make assumptions, and have unreasonable expectations. Three antidotes for these tendencies are to *stop mind reading*, *clarify expectations*, and *listen*. In this week's practice, we will explore practical ways to stop mind reading, clarify

expectations, and listen, so we are better equipped to love people in our lives and Community.

## **DO THIS PRACTICE AS A COMMUNITY RIGHT NOW**

As we read earlier, followers of Jesus are to be “quick to listen” and “slow to speak.” With this in mind, tonight’s Practice is an exercise in listening well. Split into groups of two (or three if you have an odd number) and take turns asking one another the following question: *What is one thing that has been impacting you lately?*

Read the following guidelines before you get started.

### **As the sharer:**

- Be as open and honest as you feel comfortable.
- Do not feel like you need to over-explain or qualify what is affecting you right now.
- Try to keep your statements brief enough to give the listener time to paraphrase.
- As well as you can, practice using emotions words in your sharing. (e.g. happy, disappointed, frustrated, distant, excited, resentful, defeated, honored, etc.)

### **As the listener:**

- Give the sharer your full attention and listen without interrupting.
- Avoid judging or interrupting and do not offer advice.
- As the sharer finishes, thank them for sharing and then practice active listening by attempting to paraphrase what they’ve said. You can start this by saying, “What I hear you saying is...” Remember to speak with empathy and respect. And once you finish paraphrasing, ask the person, “Is that correct?” and let them respond.

## **THIS WEEK’S PRACTICE**

As we talk about often in *Practicing The Way*, noticing is one of the most helpful ways by which we change. So this week we want to continue growing in our ability to listen by taking time to pause and reflect on how we’ve listened over the last week.

The Practice this week draws inspiration from the Examen. At three different points this week, reflect with the Holy Spirit on your day (using the questions below). We recommend using a journal to write down your reflections.

- What was the most significant conversation I had today?
- Did I try to read the person's mind in any way? Did I have any expectations of them that I need to clarify with them?
- What is one step the Holy Spirit is inviting me to take in light of these insights?