



Session 1: LISTENING, RESPONDING AND PRACTICING THE PRESENCE FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Written by Rev. Jennifer Weekes-Klein

Facilitator's Note: Each person should have a participant's study guide before the video is shared with the group. Give a brief introduction and purpose for using this series with your church small group, committee, ministry team, governing body, etc. The following handout is similar to the participant's guide and can be used to take notes throughout the video and guided mediation.

Video Teaching Notes:

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. ... And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:12-16-17

Using the passage from Colossians as our guiding passage, let's begin with these two ground rules:

1. **To Listen**

2. **To Respond**

In *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence, we learn that practicing the presence is one way to embody the spiritual disciple of holy listening and faithful response with intention, awareness, and connection in ways that "clothe us with love" and "set us apart" as "God's chosen ones."

Facilitator's Note: Ask the group the following questions and allow them to share their thoughts. If the group is larger than 12, you may wish to form smaller groups.

1. How do you normally handle difficult conversations? (Consider your family of origin, your work setting, among your friends).
2. What are some of the challenges, fears and unknowns facing a local church that wishes to explore difficult topics? What worries you personally about engaging in dialogue in which people might disagree?



Facilitator's Note: Ask the group to break into pairs to consider what guidelines for communication your group wants to establish. Consider Eric Law's "Respectful Communication Guidelines" below. What guidelines are important to keep in mind? Bring the pairs together and brainstorm the principle guidelines your group would like to establish for future conversations.

Eric Law's "Respectful Communication Guidelines"

R – take **Responsibility** for what you say and feel without blaming others

E – use **Empathetic** listening

S – be **Sensitive** to differences in communication/cultural styles

P – **Ponder** what you hear and feel before you speak

E – **Examine** your own assumptions and perceptions

C – keep **Confidentiality**

T – **Tolerate** ambiguity because we are not here to debate. There are no "winners" or "losers."

Closing Prayer:

Let me not, when this morning prayer is said,

think my worship ended and spend the day in forgetfulness of Thee.

**Rather from these moments of quietness let light go forth, and joy, and power,
that will remain with me through all the hours of the day;**

Keeping me chaste in thought:

Keeping me temperate and truthful in speech:

Keeping me humble in my estimation of myself:

Keeping me honorable and generous in my dealings with others:

Keeping me mindful of my eternal destiny as a child of Thine:

**Be my Guide through all that is dark and doubtful...Gladden my heart with Thy peace; through Jesus
Christ my Lord. Amen.**

(from John Ballie *A Diary of Private Prayer*, p. 9)

Go Deeper:

- Brother Lawrence. *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Double Day, 1977.
 - Full audiobook version (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOS9mbXJ5UU>).
- Bishop Sally Dyck. "Eight Principles of Holy Conferencing: A Study Guide for Churches and Groups," 2012.
- Rev. Dr. Scott Hughes, Discipleship Ministries, [Courageous Conversations](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/courageous-conversations-overview)
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