

Listening Deeply

Meeting a friend for lunch or coffee is one of my favorite “hobbies,” so it was very appropriate that I was able to include this activity in my internship. But I’ve discovered I can get to know a woman deeply in many different contexts, not just over coffee.

I host and lead a weekly women’s Bible study. This is not an official church activity, but rather a group of women outside of church who have committed to deep prayer for each other, honest confession of sin, and a high view of Scripture. We nicknamed our group the “Scripture Sisters.”

The first priority of the Scripture Sisters is the reading and study of Scripture. We have



thoroughly studied the books of John, Esther, 1 and 2 Peter, and now Hebrews. Although I guide these discussions and set a loose schedule for our studies, we are under no obligation to complete the study within a certain time frame.

Inevitably, the discussion of a passage of Scripture leads to conversations about real-life application, and this leads to confession of struggles in this area and prayer for the struggling woman. By simply listening, I have learned so much about these beautiful women. I rarely have deep words of wisdom to share, but Christ has formed deep relationships

between me and these women. It is not the words of wisdom I have to share, but rather the genuine interest displayed by my questions that has contributed to my deep understanding of these precious women.

In addition to my weekly meetings with the Scripture Sisters, I have met many women for great conversation over a cup of coffee. My friend, Jessica, and I have developed a beautiful friendship as we’ve shared our joys and struggles. We have developed such a deep respect for each other that we have planned a writer’s retreat in May to begin writing a study on 1 and 2 Peter.

I meet Sarah and Imani at school almost weekly. Although these two women are Spiritual Formation leaders that I mentor for my job as a Spiritual Formation Fellow, we have developed relationships beyond just school obligations. We have cried with each other over loved ones who are not walking with the Lord. I’ve celebrated weddings and engagements with them. We talk about our temptations and spiritual struggles. These two women are more than 20 years younger than me, so I have gained tremendous knowledge and respect for the Millennial generation. We are truly friends and sisters in Christ.

My friend, Shannon, and I are closer than sisters. We are both in the same stage of life. Our daughters are best friends and both are struggling with their faith right now. I do not know how I could make it through this season of life without Shannon.

I met a new friend named Heidi at Starbucks several months ago. We had never visited before, but I had seen her at church and asked if she'd like to have coffee. Our visit was so refreshing to hear how God had been at work in her life. Although she was surrounded by unbelieving siblings, somehow God called her into a relationship with Him. God has used her and her husband to witness God's love to her family.

Just today, I had a conversation with my neighbor who is going through some deep trials with their granddaughter. As she cried and shared about their situation, I had nothing wise to say but "I love you" and "I'm sorry you're going through this." And last night, another neighbor called me to ask me to pray for her gravely ill daughter. She also asked me to rally the neighborhood in prayer.

God has placed so many people in my life who need someone to just listen and pray. I have learned to stop and have the conversations when they come. When the woman who loves to talk calls me, I answer. The Scripture Sisters have taught me the agenda is not as important as the prayer. I don't think God has called me to be an amazing source of wisdom, but rather a woman who is truly present and listening.