

Listening with Love Leader's Guide

Introduction

The *Let's be Honest* group was approached by the Bishops' Conference to provide some material for Lent 2021. From the beginning, it was recognised that the opportunity to invite people to reflect on the impact of abuse on individuals, and the Church, should not be limited to a particular time and that the resource could be for use at any time.

After an initial discussion about looking at scripture and how it might be reflected upon as well as how to link the sessions the members of LBH asked survivors to prepare the resource. The survivors identified the themes and decided that, in conversations the voice of the survivor could be heard. Therefore, using scripture and recorded conversations each session reflects upon the impact of abuse. Participants are invited to listen and reflect.

At the end of the seven sessions there is an opportunity to reflect on what has been heard and what it means for the local Church.

Ways of Using this Material

This material is designed for use in small groups, with a leader and participants. At the time of writing (January 2021) we recognise that the familiar format of small groups meeting together in one place may not be possible. Many have discovered that video conferencing platforms, such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, have made coming together possible. There are a number of ways of using the material, depending on a community's circumstances or resources, each model allowing for social distancing.

The material is available in two formats:

- A PDF document for participants with separate audio clips for the Conversation
- A PowerPoint presentation (with embedded audio).

The two may be used separately or together.

Some basic starting points for groups

- Make sure that everyone knows each other.
- Respect the group — listen more than talk.
- Make sure that everyone has a chance to speak.
 - Some people find it easier to write their response first before speaking — allow time for this.
- Respect the confidentiality of the group — whatever you hear here; stays here.
 - See note on Safeguarding below

Overview of Session

All timings are for guidance and can be followed as needed.

Beginning (15 min)

- Introductions
- A brief chance to invite further reflections on the last session

Opening Prayer

Introduction

- An introduction to the theme
- Brief discussion

Listening with Love to the Word (10 min)

Prayer

Scripture

- Allow time for some silent reflection on the Word

The Conversation (30 min)

Reflection

Response

- Listen to the recorded Conversation
- Followed by silent reflection
- And a conversation in the group

Conclusion (10 minutes)

- At the end of the Conversation, the Leader may wish to draw some points together

Closing Prayer

- Invite the group to hold what they have heard, in prayer, during the coming week

Overall timing

This gives a total of 1 hour and five minutes which means that if the session is advertised as 75 minutes there is space to expand if needed and not feel rushed.

Role of Leader & Preparation

The Leader of the Group has a key role. They are to:

- Accompany the group through the sessions, listening and reflecting with them
- Make sure everyone is welcome
- Keep an eye on the process and the timing
- Ask the questions and invite reflection and discussion
- Ensure that everyone has a chance to speak and that no-one dominates the conversation

Some places may find it useful to have two leaders to share the planning and take people through the meetings, or to lead alternate weeks. It is also useful to have someone on hand, in case a member of the group finds part of the meeting difficult.

It is very important that prior to the session the leader takes time to:

- Read through the material – participant's handout and leader's notes
- Listen to the audio conversation.

It can be helpful to reflect on the questions for yourself, so that you can confidently ask others. These are reflective sessions — do not be afraid of periods of silence.

Identify someone to:

- Say the Opening Prayer
- Read the Scripture Reading.

It may be helpful to do this at the end of each session looking forward to the next.

It is suggested that the Closing Prayer is said by the group together.

In a physical setting it may be appropriate to consider a prayer focus (e.g. an open bible and candle) and whether any hospitality can be offered.

Feedback form

On the website there is an evaluation form for people to complete and comment on how the sessions went.

Safeguarding in the Group

We will be hearing from people who have survived abuse but we are aware that it is still happening.

If you are concerned about the welfare of a child or adult at risk, do not delay in contacting the police, using 999 if a child or adult is believed to be in immediate danger.

It is the policy of the Catholic Church in England and Wales to report all allegations of abuse to statutory authorities, regardless of whether the abuse occurred recently or in the past, or whether the accused person is living or deceased.

If you are in any role within the Catholic Church in England and Wales (such as Group Leader), you must refer allegations directly to the Safeguarding Office for your diocese or religious congregation, or directly to the Police.

You can also contact CSAS

by telephoning 07855 123398.

or via email at admin@csas.uk.net

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