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CD702: Working With People
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In the class “Working with the People" during our counseling triads each member had to take part as a “speaker, listener, and an observer”. The “Counseling Triad" group that I was in included two other members; Jessica and Kelly. It reminded me of the two sisters that I never had. What made this group very special was how easy they made it for the speaker to convey their “shadow”. I believe that one of the first things that made the speaker feel comfortable was asking them about their background. This gave the speaker a chance to explain where they were born and what their parents did for a living so that the listener could have a clearer picture. As the speaker, I was nervous at first but that feeling soon subsided as I thought about how much my story of sharing my shadow could encourage others. But at the same time, my mind was racing about when to tell it and how much of the details I should spare or share. What I noticed was that when either Jessica or Kelly asked me questions to gather more information, their tone of voice or body language either made me divulge more or less. The tone of voice created a soothing atmosphere which made me relax and felt empathy from their point of view as if a mother was comforting a harmed child’s inner parts. However, when the body language changed it made me want to share less because I felt an invasion of my space. For example, when one member before asking me a question, sat up and leaned forward, it made me feel not that they were curious or cared about how my shadow affected me, but more invasive where my guard wanted to go back up.

As a listener, I tried to understand their hurt and pain without making them feel that I was not trying to be so invasive. The first time I was a listener, it was very hard because I wanted to

finish their sentences for them and felt a sense that part of the story that they were telling was very similar to mine. However, on the second day, I was more comfortable in my role as a listener. I had to suppress thoughts that came to the front of my mind and not ask a question when I had seen that their voice became shallow or when their body language changed by being sort of tense. As a listener, I learned to let them lead and made efforts to adjust my tone of voice or my paraphrasing to make them feel that their "shadow" was safe with me. I wanted them to understand that by them being open and vulnerable, their shadow could be put to death by bringing it into the light (Colossians 3:5). However, one of the hardest parts of being a listener is unlearning the way that we are used to asking questions; because most of the time they start with (the question) why? In addition, the other thing that the group all believed was challenging was the need to offer resolutions from the speaker. Every time that I wanted to assist the speaker with different solutions, I heard Professor Sanders' voice saying, "This class is called working with the people, not helping the people". If we decided to help the people who are trying to find out where they are at and their identity by offering them decisions, then they probably would want us to help them continually. We have to let them sort out their situation so they can find clarity for themselves. In hindsight, they want us to play God, which will only hinder both them and the one who is trying to assist them.

When it came to the role of being the observer, I was able to gleam and get a better perspective of what was happening between the speaker and the listener. There were times when I felt Jessica (as the listener) push a little too hard by asking Kelly (as the speaker) questions right behind another. Kelly responded by pausing and thinking about how she should answer these questions. It was as if she needed more time to think about and answer each question individually. However, as Kelly paused, Jessica was able to analyze Kelly's body language and

proceeded with caution by letting Kelly regroup, collect her thoughts, and answer the questions that she wanted to. When it came to Kelly (as the listener) and Jessica (as the speaker), Kelly seemed to be more reserved when asking questions, but very fluent with her "yes and okays", and more empathetic which made Jessica more comfortable to go further into her shadow. In addition, as the observer myself, I saw and realized where I had failed by not letting the silence or quietness work to my advantage. For example, when either Jessica or Kelly was quiet, I now realize (as the observer) that they were internalizing their thoughts and feelings, but instead (when I was the listener) I asked a question that made them go in a different direction. However, when I went back to addressing the previous question, they were reluctant to talk about it. From this, I learned to let them finish processing their thoughts because it would help them to address and to express their feelings.

Overall, after discussing what we did well and what we need to strengthen, we all agreed that we would have to enter into one's world so that we could better understand, communicate, and draw out what the speaker is trying to or avoiding to say. We also learned a lot from what questions were being asked, but I learned most from what they were left out (as an observer) which when I became a speaker made me more effective (according to Jessica and Kelly). When it comes to grading my colleagues, I would give Jessica an "A", because of her ability to extract crucial information so that a person can take ownership of their issues. I would also give Kelly an "A" because of her gentleness when asking questions which makes the speaker more comfortable revealing more information about their shadow.

The takeaway that I learned from the counseling triad sessions that would help with my ministry is to learn how to be a good listener. Being a good listener does not mean that you agree or disagree with the speaker's point of view, but just be reassuring by using eye contact and by

replying with questions such as, what do I think that I hear you saying? It also helps when we realize that what is said is different from what is being communicated. This is important because a person's body language and facial expressions can give one a better idea of what is going on in their head and allows us to focus on the person's needs and not their counseling needs. By talking candidly, people will see the truth and reveal more of themselves. The whole point is to make people understand that there is a process to get to the next level. Each step can bring people closer to a "new life pattern" and freedom if they are willing to do the complex and challenging work.