



Week 2. Transcript of the podcast by Neville Barnes.

This is week 2 of the seeing hearing valuing podcast and week 2 for sharing your faith story. The reason that I'm giving you more instructions for seeing, listening and valuing is because we often exist in church quite passively. We listen for ourselves rather than listening on behalf of the other person. We listen for information and we measure the other person or ourselves against it. We pre-decide what we want to see, we then look for it and that can mean we miss what's really there. We look, not to really see, but too often we look because we want to measure. We measure people. We measure places, we measure other people's character. I believe the gospel requires that we see in order to treasure not measure. As I read the Bible, as I see how Jesus interacts with people. He listens and he sees from the inside out. We however tend to live, to listen, to see from the outside in. Its why our tendency is to measure rather than treasure. Evangelism at its best will mean us stopping for the one. That's both the one in front of us and the one who lives in us. Treasuring what we hear and what we see, and by that I mean seeing beyond what's presented and hearing behind what has been said. This, I hope will be the culture in your Envoy community. To see and hear from the inside out and to treasure whatever that is and not measure it and we do this so when we are not in our community it will be second nature to us among those who have little or no awareness of God.

And so a quick reminder.

See and be seen.

Hear and be heard.

Lean in and release value.

Remember for this to be real means it needs to be two way. It's one thing for me to see, hear and value but another one to allow others to see behind the stage of my life. To hear the things I didn't say but are none the less true and to allow them to praise me, encourage me and challenge me. It can feel very vulnerable. It can feel exposing. I don't mean for you to pour out your guts, please don't do that. I mean, allow intimacy, into your story as you share it. A good breakdown of the word intimacy is; in, to, me, see - intimacy.

Seeing and hearing someone from the inside out, like Jesus did with the woman at the well in John chapter 4. This will now sound like I'm contradicting myself as the conversation he has with her runs from the surface to the heart, however, I believe Jesus saw the heart and worked his way there. A conversation about needing a drink of water became a conversation about the best place to worship. That became a conversation about home life and that opened up a moment of revelation that she later described as being told everything she ever did. He saw her from the inside out. Our evangelism will need us to see people from the inside out.

A little while ago I got into a great conversation with a guy who is now a really good friend. I asked, as I often do, for him to just simply tell me his story. His life, on the surface, was a list of tick boxes, all ticked. He is in his early 20s and owns his own business, he told me about his girlfriend, travelling the world and his growing following on Instagram and a few other adventures. As we chatted, I was genuinely trying to see him as God saw him, but that required me seeing beyond Instagram and hearing beyond the, 'I'm great, life couldn't be better. I asked him, 'can I tell you what I see in you as I listen to you?' And he said, 'what's that?' I told him, I see a really deep goodness in you at the very core of who you are. His posture changed. His energy and larger than life persona melted away and his head dropped. He said, in a very different tone, 'You don't know me'. I said, you're right, I don't, but it's still what I see in you. I'm guessing if God were to sum you up in one word it would be goodness. He protested saying 'but you don't know what I've done'. Then he explained why in his opinion I was wrong, why he wasn't a good person. He told me the kind of person he saw himself to be, exemplifying some difficulties in his life and how he'd dealt with them. Really what it boiled down to was behaviour, his mess ups and failures and I explained that I wasn't talking about good behaviour. I was talking about what would be there if I stripped all the achievements and all the regrettable things he'd done away. I added that I knew he wasn't religious but in my way of seeing the world everyone carries the image of God, life just covers it up and we either don't know it's there or stop believing it's there. If the whole image of God thing is true and I thought it to be true then it was goodness that God first saw when he saw him. That made him so uncomfortable, and it changed the level of our conversation not just that night but for all the conversations that followed. From time to time between the GIFs and MEMEs and ridiculous messages that go between us we return to talking about what was at the core of him. It was eventually the

place the good news began to find space in him. An even better example is in Genesis 16v13. Hagar is a woman on the run from a bad situation and sits down to rest when she encounters God. After the event the bible records this, "She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me."

How do you know how to see like this or hear like this?

The bible language is revelation or discernment. Unfortunately we've trained ourselves that God speaks on Sunday or at prayer meetings or the like. I believe God would be up for conversations in the normal 9-5 days we live. God speaking is not nearly as grand as it sounds. While you are with someone an image might start forming in your head or a word, a phrase, a song, a smell, a physical sensation. You might feel an emotion, even an irritation. As you listen or watch them something may just not ring true. The list is endless. Given that its God who is stirring and prompting you, it might feel like we are making it up as we go along. Extra hard for those who like a plan or time to reflect before replying. The reason we want to build this into Envoy culture is the old adage, 'practice makes perfect' and we want you to have this as second nature and Envoy is a safe place to give it a go. It's also OK to return to something that hadn't fully formed on another week or in your WhatsApp group.

This requires LISTENING to the Holy Spirit. So ask the Holy Spirit while you are at Envoy, 'Lord, I want to see and hear but I need your help'. This is often when people panic, saying, I can't hear God speak. I want you to visualize a spectrum of colour. One end is definitely you and the other end is definitely the Holy Spirit. Some people panic, thinking, 'what if it's me and my vivid imagination and not the Holy Spirit?'. How do you know if it really is the Holy Spirit? Philippians 4 v 8 says, 'whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable. If anything is excellent or praiseworthy. Think about such things, and the God of peace will be with you'. I want you to take that spectrum and set it inside the guide of Philippians 4 v 8, which basically is saying, is it good? If your answer to that is yes, if what you think you see and hear is good, I want you to take a risk and I want you to share it. The risk part is actually faith, Gods currency with us and in our community will be faith. Once you've shared it allow the other person to work out if it's you or God, if that even needs to happen. Again this is not a church setting so it's OK for them to

come back and ask questions, after all, that's what would most likely happen if you did this at work, on your street or at University. I promise if it's the Holy Spirit the person will just know deeply in themselves. If it's from you, they will be greatly encouraged. By the way if you are encouraged and it relates to something in you, tell the person who just took the risk. One of the jobs of the body of Christ is to build each other up and this two way conversation is a basic building block for that. It's a win-win. I'm certain God isn't after a, 'thus saith the Lord statement' but rather, that your normal relationship to the Holy Spirit is such, that its actually both you AND the Holy Spirit speaking. We talk in Envoy about Evangelism having two parents, you and the Holy Spirit. Evangelism needs to look like, sound like, feel like you both for it to be authentic to the person encountering it. It's the same with hearing, seeing and valuing, it's both of you, so no changing your accent, no booming voice. Unless a booming voice is your normal voice, then that's OK.

As you act on this hearing and seeing you are moving into actively valuing the person. Imagine how good it is for the person who feels heard, who feels listened to and you've brought maybe a scripture or brought a question, and actually it touches them at such a deep level. Value released changes the story that they're telling. Now imagine that happening in evangelism, where you simply say something that you're not sure if it's you or the Holy Spirit, but because it's both of you working together something changes in the person's life as they listen to you. That was my experience in telling the guy I saw goodness in him.

Why are we labouring this? Psalm 42 v 7 talks about, 'deep, calling out to deep like waterfalls'. When God's Spirit calls out, it's the person's spirit that hears. Yes of course the mind and the heart are involved but it's the human spirit that God has His best conversations with. I don't know about you but when I've experienced this, it is beyond description emotionally and my rationale cannot fully hold it but it changes something in the very DNA of who I am. God, I believe is very much wanting to cry out to the depth of people. It's just that often people find the idea of God or a spiritual dimension a bit odd. They often won't have any concept of being made in the image of God. If true, then they certainly won't have a language with which they can hold a conversation without feeling out of their depth. It may frighten them quite a bit. That's where they need you to listen and to listen deeply so they begin to realize, ah, there is another part of me.

Jesus does this with the woman at the well, He does it with Nathaniel when he tells him, I saw you sitting under the tree. I wonder what Jesus saw when he looked up into the tree and saw Zacchaeus. Whatever he saw his leaning in to release value was to invite himself, very bold!, for food at the house of Zacchaeus. This seeing, hearing, valuing is the normal around Jesus and is often accompanied by a light bulb moment in the hearer and the Kingdom of God breaking in around them. Jericho was certainly a better city after Jesus showed Zacchaeus value by having food with him.

To release value is an action. We can't add value, because God has already added value to each person's life, what we can do is release value, most especially if the person isn't living with an awareness of or out of that value. I will only say the word confidentially very briefly here, as I think you will know what I mean by that. Please don't repeat outside of your Envoy community, what you hear within that community. If it's a good testimony, if it's a great story. You may say, actually, we should share this with more people than just here. If I hear a great story I will certainly be saying to you, do I have your permission to share this with other people, but also respect confidentiality?

As you practice seeing each other, hearing each other and leaning in to add value, you could mistake it for counselling session. It is not that, Galatians 6 v 1 - 10 describes the perfect get together. So I would say go and read that. But I will highlight two verses within it, verse two, and verse five. Verse two says, 'bear one another's burdens'. That's the community. Verse five says that each should bear his or her own load. That's the individual. It sounds like a contradiction but whatever it is that you're carrying, a burden, a call, a joy. It was yours when you arrived, it remains yours during your time in community, and it remains yours to carry as you leave. However, the work of the community is to hold you, as you bear your burden. As you go further with evangelism, the community will be with you, for you and maybe even get to help you but they can't do your evangelism for you. It belongs to you. You will be sharing life with your Envoy community so they get that release value for you. At the end of that process week by week, it remains yours, but hopefully something has been transformed within it. As a community, we hold each other. But as individuals, we hold our own lives, that is not the work of anyone else.

So as you meet each week.

- See and be seen. What is it you're seeing from the inside of another person.
- Hear and be heard. What is the mood music coming out of this person, as I listened to them.

Listening is the spectrum between you and the Holy Spirit, not either or, but both.

- Lean in to release value. Because love looks like something.

What will love look like in your words, what will love look like in your actions. Can love look like a challenge, if it's needed? Valuing is not simply being nice.

It's being one who disciples for the good of you both.

I want to finish with a story from a past Envoy participant who put this into practice at her work. It's told by Stephen who led her Envoy community.

When you gather together in your meet-up.

The space that we want to carve out needs to be;

1. **Welcoming.** *A sense that you and the others belong.*
2. **Safe.** *Otherwise who'd ever take a risk. Practice confidentiality.*
3. **Significant.** *Your time and presence is valuable so speak and do the things that come from or arrive into that which is significant. Treat everyone as present even if they can't be with you.*

A few last thoughts

1. *Do you understand? If not ask, either in your group or get in contact with Neville, Emma Ronan or David.*
2. *As the year goes by you will be reaching moments where you know what you next need to do in mission and evangelism. Self commitment is tough and often withers from pressure, distraction, fear or too much information. Who in your ENVOY community can you ask to check in with you? It won't always be the same person, it's the one who resonates with your 'action plan'. They don't hold you accountable, you hold yourself accountable. They are there to challenge you when you don't bother with your commitment, to motivate you when it feels too hard. To laugh with you when it goes wrong. To pray for you throughout. Time bound it so it isn't a 'for life' thing!*

3. *When committing to an action, break it down into 4 or 5 next steps. The best way to write these and share them is to think what will it look like so I know it is happening?*
4. *Paul in Acts 15 describes a decision as seeming good to them and to the Holy Spirit. Keep checking in, teasing things out with this community and with God.*