



Course 4, Session 3 Student Notes: Listen First, Discovery and Real Need

Diagnosis Before Prescription

Big Idea: You cannot serve what you have not heard. Great selling is mostly asking good questions and truly listening.

How to use these notes. These are yours to study on your own, before or after the session. Read each section slowly. Under every principle there is a **Notes** space to write what stands out to you, and a **Reflect** question to answer honestly in writing. Keep your Bible nearby. Take about 30 minutes, and end in prayer. Bring your notes and questions to the group.

Open in Prayer

Before you begin, pray this simple prayer, or your own: "Lord, make me quick to hear and slow to speak, so I can serve what I actually understand. Give me the patience to ask, the stillness to listen, and the care to hear the real need beneath the words. Amen."

The Scripture for This Session

Read these slowly, out loud if you can:

- **Mark 10:51**, "And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do for thee?"
- **Proverbs 18:13**, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."
- **James 1:19**, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak."

Reflect: In sales conversations, are you more of a teller or an asker? What do you think would change if you flipped it?

The Big Picture

Start with the most surprising verse about selling in the whole Bible, and it is a question asked by a man who never needed to ask anything. Blind Bartimaeus is sitting by the road, shouting for mercy, and Jesus stops,

calls him over, and asks him this: “What wilt thou that I should do for thee?” (Mark 10:51). Feel how strange that is. This is the Son of God. He made the man’s eyes. He already knows the man is blind, and already knows what he wants. And He asks anyway. Why? Because honoring a person means letting them name their own need. If the One who knows everything still asked before He acted, then no salesperson alive is above discovery.

Here is the principle to burn into your mind this session: diagnosis before prescription. You ask before you tell. You listen before you pitch. Most of us do the opposite, because we are nervous and our product is the only thing we feel sure of, so we lead with it. But leading with the pitch tells the person, “I care about my sale, not your situation.” Leading with a real question tells them, “I see you, and I want to understand you before I try to help you.” Over this session we will look at four truths about listening first, and study the moment Jesus stopped for one man’s need. Read each one, write your notes, and answer the reflection.

Principle 1: Ask More Than You Tell. Diagnosis Before Prescription.

No good doctor prescribes before they diagnose. They ask, they examine, they understand, and only then do they recommend. Selling that serves works the same way. For the first two thirds of a discovery conversation, your job is to ask honest questions and truly listen to the answers, not to load up the next thing you want to say.

This feels backwards to most of us, because we are surest of our product and least sure of the conversation, so we reach for the product like a life raft. Resist that. Ask about their situation, their goals, and their frustrations long before you mention a single feature of what you sell. The more you understand before you speak, the more your eventual recommendation will actually fit. Asking is not stalling. Asking is the work. It is how you earn the right to prescribe anything at all.

Reflect: In your last few sales conversations, roughly what share of the time were you talking versus asking? What would it take to spend the first two thirds only asking and listening?

Notes:

Principle 2: People Buy When They Feel Understood, Not When They Feel Pitched.

Think about your own experience as a buyer. You do not open up to the person who talks at you. You open up to the person who seems to genuinely get your situation. That feeling of being understood is what lowers a person’s defenses and lets them actually consider what you offer. It is not a technique, it is a human truth: understood people trust, and trusting people decide.

So the goal of your questions is not to soften someone up for the pitch. That would be manipulation wearing a friendly face, and we renounced that last session. The goal is to actually understand them, because you cannot serve what you have not heard. When a person feels truly heard, something relaxes. They stop

defending and start problem solving with you. And often the sale takes care of itself from there, not because you pushed, but because you understood, and understanding is rare enough that people are drawn to it.

Reflect: When was the last time a seller made you feel truly understood, and what did they do? How could you give that same experience to the next person you serve?

Notes:

Principle 3: Listen for the Real Problem Under the Stated One.

The first thing a person tells you is rarely the whole thing. Proverbs 20:5 says, “Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.” The real need usually sits deeper than the first words, and a person of understanding draws it out with patient questions.

The man says he wants a cheaper option, but underneath he is afraid of being taken advantage of again. The woman says she wants more features, but underneath she is drowning and just wants to feel in control. If you only serve the stated problem, you often miss what is actually going on, and your help lands flat. But if you keep asking gently, “tell me more about that,” “what makes that important to you,” you draw the deep water up, and then you finally understand what you are truly serving. Listen past the words to the concern behind them, and your solution will fit the person, not just the sentence.

Reflect: Think of a recent customer. What did they say they wanted, and what might the deeper need under it have been? What question could have drawn it out?

Notes:

Principle 4: Answering Before You Have Listened Is, Scripture Says, Folly.

God puts a moral weight on listening. “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him” (Proverbs 18:13). That is blunt. To answer before you have listened is not merely bad technique, it is folly and shame. And James says it the way you should hang it on your wall: “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak” (James 1:19).

Now flip that verse and you have the average salesperson: slow to hear, swift to speak. We have it exactly backwards, and Scripture says the right order out loud. Listening first is not a soft skill you add if you have time. It is obedience, and it is the fastest way to actually help someone. Yes, it will sometimes slow the sale down, and it will sometimes reveal that your offer is not the right fit, which we will face head on next session.

But every minute you spend genuinely understanding a person is an investment in trust, and trust is the only soil an honest sale ever grows in.

Reflect: Where have you been answering before you have really listened? What is one habit that would make you swifter to hear and slower to speak?

Notes:

The Story: What Do You Want Me to Do for You (Mark 10:46 to 52)

Read the whole passage slowly. It is short, and every detail teaches.

First, see the need that almost got silenced. Bartimaeus is a blind beggar outside Jericho, and when he hears Jesus is near he cries out, "have mercy on me" (verse 47). The well meaning crowd tells him to be quiet (verse 48). Notice that. The need was there, real and loud, and the people around almost talked over it. In selling, the "crowd" is your own agenda, your script, your hurry, and it will talk right over the real need if you let it. Most of your customers will not shout, so if you are not listening, their real need will pass by in silence. Second, see that Jesus stops. "And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called" (verse 49). Stopping is the first act of listening, because you cannot hear a person you are rushing past. Third, see the question, the heart of the whole scene: "What wilt thou that I should do for thee?" (verse 51). He asks, though He knows, because letting the man name his own need honors the man, and the question makes Bartimaeus put his real desire into his own words: "Lord, that I might receive my sight." Fourth, the help comes after the listening, and it fits perfectly: "thy faith hath made thee whole" (verse 52). That is what happens when you serve what you have actually heard. The help lands, because it was shaped by understanding and not by assumption.

Reflect: What is the "crowd" in your sales conversations, the agenda or hurry that talks over the customer's real need? Whose real need have you maybe never heard because you pitched before you asked?

Notes:

Put It Into Practice

1. Write five discovery questions. Write five honest questions you could ask a prospect that have nothing to do with your product, only their situation, their goal, and their frustration. Good questions draw out deep water. Aim for ones that cannot be answered with a single word.

2. This week's assignment. In one real sales conversation, spend the first two thirds only asking and listening. Do not reach for your product early. Afterward, write what you learned about the person's real need that you would have missed if you had pitched first.

The real need I heard by listening first:

What I would have missed if I had pitched first:

Go Deeper (Optional)

- **Read:** *Never Split the Difference* by Chris Voss, on listening and drawing people out.
- **Listen:** the *Faith Driven Entrepreneur* podcast.
- **Study:** Mark 10:46 to 52; Proverbs 18:13; Proverbs 20:5; James 1:19. Consider the design firm IDEO, which begins every project by observing and interviewing the real people who will use a product, letting what they hear shape the solution, exactly the order Jesus modeled with Bartimaeus.

Close in Prayer

"Father, You stopped for one blind man on the most important journey in history, and You asked him to name his own need. Teach me to stop like that, to give people my full attention, to ask before I answer, and to listen for the real thing beneath their words. Make me swift to hear and slow to speak, so that I serve what I have actually understood. In Jesus' name, Amen."

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James 1:19*