



Member Care Update

Ethnê-MC Facilitation Team

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This month, Dr. Brent Lindquist and I offer these thoughts about finding time to be renewed during weeks that can be very hectic. Do you have tips for a successful Christmas Season to share with our readers? We'd love to hear how you refresh your spirit while celebrating the birth of our Savior.

The holiday season is upon us--the hustle and bustle with time pressures and obligations to go, give, and even receive are here. In the middle of this season that can be so hectic, God has given us views into how He would like us to spend our Christmas.

God presents stories throughout the Bible that show the importance of relationships. The Christmas story is no different. Let's consider Mary and Elizabeth and see what we can learn from these two women.

"Mary didn't waste a minute. She got up and traveled to a town in Judah in the hill country, straight to Zachariah's house, and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby in her womb leaped....Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months and then went back to her own home." (Luke 1:39-40, 56 The Message)

Mary, on learning she is pregnant, rushed to her Aunt Elizabeth--the one person on earth who would believe her and understand what she was going through. Can you imagine how many quiet walks they had in the garden exclaiming over their amazing pregnancies? Can you picture the comfort they found in sharing their experience?

Christmas isn't the only time of year when we need to gather with people who understand us and the lives we live, but it is a very important time. The many pressures of the season can lead to feelings of discontent, discouragement and even depression if we're not careful. Meeting with like minded people and sharing our walk with them, finding comfort in our shared experiences, giving grace to be who we really are, are important ingredients for a successful holiday season. After Mary met with Elizabeth, she was better prepared to go home and face the music of her unmarried pregnancy.

We are strengthened for the tasks God has given us to do when we step aside from our busy days and meet with those who love and understand us. Taking time to share our concerns, hurts and hopes prepares us for what is waiting at home, in our church and community. This season, I hope you will take time to meet with at least one friend and give the gift of listening,

hearing and praying for each other.

It may be helpful to be reminded of how to be a good listener as we seek to give the gift of listening to people in our lives. Carol Travilla has written a great book called Caring without Wearing. I want to point out a few of her tips on listening.

"Active listening requires that we get inside the speaker, that we grasp from his or her point of view just what the person is communicating to us. More than that, we must then convey to the speaker that we are seeing things from his or her point of view.

Active listening is listening intently to both verbal and nonverbal messages.... I listen without making judgments or giving advice. I listen instead of interrupting and responding from my perspective.

Learning to listen actively to others will help you to...

- *Express empathy*
- *Gather all of the facts rather than jump to conclusions*
- *Provide a sounding board for the person to think through the issue and discern what to do*
- *Avoid giving insensitive answers or unwise counsel."*

I especially like her description on page 32 of a conversation. *"Perhaps it would be useful to think in terms of a tennis game. The server serves the ball and puts it in the opponent's court. A courteous player will focus on the serve and do all he can to return it rather than ignore the serve and hit his own ball. So it is with active listening. The key is staying with the other person and what he or she is experiencing."*

May your holidays lead you to worship our Lord and celebrate the special relationships He has given you!

Merry Christmas,

Brent Lindquist and Linda Swanson

Dr. Brent Lindquist is the President of Link Care Center, a counseling center for missionaries and pastors. Linda enjoys her various roles providing member care to missionaries around the world and as Brent's assistant.