

Bringing Hope by Listening

by Vicki Griffin

Thousands of our neighbors and friends are trapped in debilitating lifestyles and attitudes that make living virtually unbearable. They are ready to give up. I met such a person at a feed store one day. He was bloated, ashen, and tired. His eyes were dull and lifeless. The tobacco spittle seemed to drag any possibility of a smile from the corners of his mouth.

Eager to share some simple lifestyle tips that were sure to make his life better, I asked, "Would you like to add seven years to your life?" I was stunned by his reply. "Honey, it's all I can do to drag out an existence. I don't want to live any longer than I have to." He wasn't kidding.

His response helped me realize more keenly the depth of brokenness that people live with, the multiple problems that engulf them, and how important it is to seek first to understand and then be understood.

Not long before I had felt my situation was hopeless. For twenty miserable years I was a prisoner of severe bulimia. Then, at the age of 31, I was ecstatic to find God's truth, His power, His rest from bondage, and His message of hope for a better life by His marvelous grace.

The most important skill in reaching out to hurting people is listening. The second most important skill is asking the right questions to understand their perceived needs and concerns. Only then will they believe we are really there to help, and not to overwhelm them with our own agenda.

We must be willing to listen to their pain—to show enough interest to ask questions that help us understand their perceived needs. Rather than judging them, we must truly love them.

I'm encouraged by God's promise that He will empower willing, committed people like you and me with His message of hope. A message that will rescue many from physical, mental, and moral decay. A message of healing for perishing, broken,

out-of-control people.

Helping people find Christ and His power—that's why I share God's principles of health and healing. And you can share them too. Each month in this column, we will present principles included in the attractive sharing modules produced by Lifestyle Matters ministry.

May God grant each of us His gracious spirit in ministry, is my prayer.

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