



# Missional Posture

**What does it mean to engage in missional listening? Ben Lucas shares his story**

## **Missional listening – the briefest of introductions**

**M**issional listening was a new term to us when our family of six were called on a pioneering adventure in rural Dorset. Back then I described it as a dual listening – one ear to God – one ear to community – and then the finding of courage to join in all God is doing. As a brief introduction – only possible with this word count – that’s still a pretty good description as it goes! I cannot even begin to contemplate how

I could share the beautiful and amazing discoveries the last five years have uncovered as we have simply been present and listened. What I can explain here is the major changes it has made to our missional posture as we lived and listened to the communities around us and to the unchanging God who is still in the mission of reconciling all things to him.

## **Posture towards God**

As we transitioned from more traditional pastors to our new roles – we struggled. (Well in truth, I did – the others flourished!) I asked all the wrong questions, informed by scripts embedded by society, such as: How can we make our roles financially secure? Will Christians in the area join in what we are doing? Will we be successful?

The wrong questions filled with agenda.

As we listened outside the Christian bubble we had become used to, we realised that we did not have enough answers. Even though neither my fitness nor eyesight are what they were, I am still pretty decent at cricket and was quickly promoted to the first team, where I played with lads 20 years younger. I was shocked by conversations – mainly those about women. One young lad was off on a two-and-a-half-hour trip to sleep with someone – because he had ‘slept with everyone closer on Tinder’. My traditional approaches to evangelism, discipleship and worship were unlikely to translate to the people we were now called to do life with. We had all the wrong questions and not enough answers. I went to

God with a significantly different posture. Instead of asking him to bless all our endeavours and gifting, we went with the vulnerability and empty nets of the fishermen towards the end of John's gospel. We heard that we were in the right place, but were now to do this thing called mission differently. It meant laying our plans aside to truly listen to God and join in with all that he was already doing. That posture led to a new set of questions and many incredible answers as we lived life in the community.

## Posture towards community

Luke 10 has always been a chapter that has spoken deeply to us and many. In our new roles it spoke to us in deeper and new ways. We noticed the "take little with you". We recognised it wasn't God trying to keep us poor but more about needing our neighbour rather than seeing them as a missional target. God was suggesting that we should have the same posture as Jesus at Jacob's well, where the vulnerable, beautiful statement "can I have some water?" began a conversation that would change the life of the Samaritan woman and many more. Instead of going to the neighbour with our neatly packaged testimony and evangelistic toolbox, we were being called to need the neighbour in our lives, finding permission to live life with them and waiting for the invitation to share our story – a story that still has the power to transform the world.

Jesus continues in Luke 10, "eat what is placed in front of you". Can there be a more radical calling to the Jewish followers of Jesus? This is a prequel to Peter

and Cornelius. This is Jesus saying – my eating habits of dining with the tax collectors and sinners are to be your eating habits. Instead of judging all that goes on in society and hoping and praying people may leave the darkness to join us somewhere else – we eat what's put in front of us – realising that light, goodness, grace and ultimately churches can organically grow right there in the most unexpected of places.

Jesus then says, "Do not move from place to place". Instead of seeing this time as a season – going after the low-lying fruit – the calling is to settle in place for the long term, recognising that it is over a lifetime that many of us will see relationships deepen and Christian community arise.

## Things beyond our imagining

As we live and listen to God and community, God is doing far beyond anything we could imagine. We have little churches bubbling up, not just in the village where we live but in other villages and towns too. We have seen healing in community, partnerships built, and the most unlikely people find Jesus in the most unexpected ways. Selfishly, the greatest 'outcome' is the sense of us as a family living life in all its fullness. It feels like being present in community – needing our neighbour, living life with them, and waiting for the invitation – and coming humbly to God with empty hands, desperate for him to show us how to join all that he is doing, is exactly the life he has called us to. We do not offer missional listening as a successful blueprint or a missional activity to be rolled out across the world as a 'programme' – but we humbly

offer you the posture changes that have occurred in our own lives, hoping that they will lead you and the places and people you do life with to life in all its fullness.



**CONVERSATION**

How do you listen to your community?

What has surprised you about what God is already doing in your community?

**STARTERS**



**Ben Lucas was the minister of a large Baptist church before moving to rural Dorset in 2017. He and his family are living incarnationally, engaged in missional listening.**

**Ben will be part of a team engaged in listening at the 2022 Baptist Assembly**