

## LISTEN FOR WHATS BELOW THE WATERLINE – Introduction

Relational encounters are in ways, like an iceberg. We often communicate only the “tip of the iceberg”, while fears, desires, longings and feelings are hidden “below the waterline”. To discover the deeper matters of the heart requires us to be gentle and attentive. To create a space safe enough for a person to go below the waterline and share the contents of their heart we must listen carefully, validate hurts and desires, and provide encouragement and assurance.



The book of Job provides excellent examples of how to respond (and what not to say) when someone we care about is hurting or upset.

When Job suffered heartbreaking losses, his community and close friends ended up judging and shaming him. The following page contains things Job said to these friends. As you read, first, look for what might be below the waterline (what are Job’s unspoken longings, fears, feelings?) We will then ask you to then write what you think Job needs from his friends and what they might say or do to create a safe, supportive space for Job. Although we can’t know with certainty what Job was longing for, we can imagine what it would be like to be in terrible physical pain, grieving the loss of his children, his earthly possessions, and his reputation. What might you have wanted to hear from your friends if you were Job? Here are some examples to get you started.

### **JOB’S WORDS**

Job 6:21 “You have proved to be of no help- you see something dreadful and are afraid”

6:26-27 “Do you mean to .... treat the words of a despairing man as wind?”

### **POSSIBLE DESIRE OR LONGING**

*“Please manage your own feelings so you can be fully present to care for me”*

*“Please hold and value my story - I need encouragement”*



## **LISTEN FOR WHATS BELOW THE WATERLINE – Practice**

As you read what Job said to his friends (below), listen for unspoken longings. What might he have needed his friends to do or say in each example? There are many possible answers and no right or wrong answer—if you get stuck, just skip that question and go on to the next.

“If the roles were reversed, I could make fine speeches against you but my mouth would encourage you. Comfort from my lips would bring you relief” (Job 16:4-5)

“Listen carefully to my words; let this be the consolation you give me. Bear with me while I speak...” (Job 21:2-3)

“If I say I will forget my complaint I will change my expression and smile, I still dread all my sufferings” (Job 9:27-28)

“My kinsmen have gone away; my friends have forgotten me. My guests...count me as a stranger...I summon my servant but he does not answer though I beg him. My breath is offensive to my wife; I am loathsome to my own brothers...those I love have turned against me” (Job 19:14-17, 19)

***Romans 12:15 “...mourn with those who mourn”***