

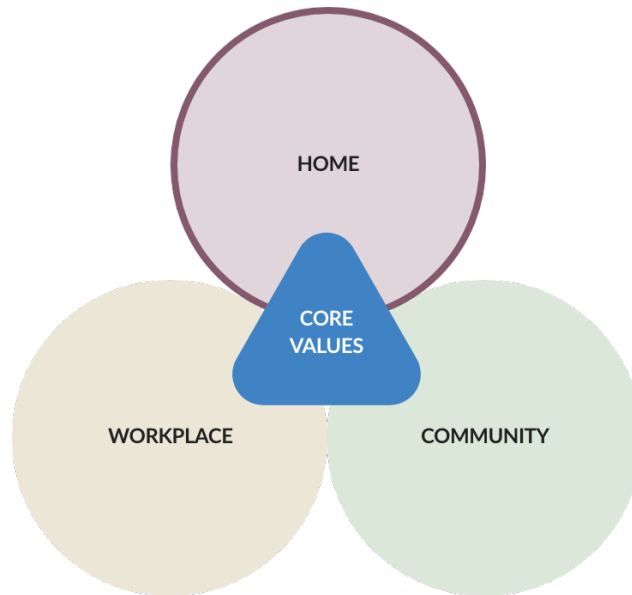
The Practices of Paying Attention: Listening and Observing

How your Core Values guide
your relationships at home



RESTORED LEADER

The relationship model



Core Values:

Undeniable truths that help you make sense of self and the world.

Home:

These relationships are those you consider “family”.

Community:

They are your friends, neighbors and places of worship.

Workplace:

These relationships are with your professional colleagues and customers you serve.

Listening and Observing

Do you ever wonder who's in charge at home?

Or what the “rule” of leadership is when it comes to life as a couple?

The answer is simple on paper: Each spouse in the relationship is called to pursue loving one another sacrificially, 100 percent of the time. This causes each spouse to influence one another towards holiness and unity with Jesus.

This pursuit is admittedly less simple when you're in the moment.

Let's go back to God's intentions with man and woman:
We know that God intended for each spouse to play the most significant human influence on the other. And we've likely seen this play out in our own relationships - when we fail to have a strong positive influence on each other as partners, we can be assured hardships will compound. The first couple in the garden proved this.

To best influence one another is to learn how to pay attention to each other.

Communicate by listening.

This is a lifetime skill to develop and we likely will never perfect it.

But this season, I invite you to consider how it might be the time to make progress, improve and see how listening can support you and your spouse in your personal Core Values and your family's Core Values.

Paying Attention: LISTENING

You know the best way to show that you're paying attention is to listen. But you likely also know that listening well doesn't come naturally and typically needs to be practised and developed. There are three levels of listening that help you show those entrusted to you that you are *truly* paying close attention to them.

Understanding these 3 levels of listening will help you break down listening as a skill that you can learn.

- **Level 1 - Listening for self.**

Have you been in a conversation where you notice that what you're primarily listening for is the next opportunity for you to respond? This is the default way of listening.

You're not fully engaged with what the other person is saying, and your brain is mostly occupied by formulating your next talking points. This level of listening can also include listening for information alone – you're waiting to confirm something that you already think or believe, so you're listening for validation.

- **Level 2 - Listening for content.**

In the same way that a fast food drive through repeats your order back to you to ensure they captured everything correctly,

it can be immensely helpful to repeat what you glean from a conversation back to your partner. When you listen with curiosity, you'll be present in the conversation and listening deeply to what is being said.

To practise this, try asking: "To ensure I understand you, may I play back what I heard you say?"

- **Level 3 - Listening for context.**

It's important to listen to how words are spoken and what is being communicated *apart* from the words. Do this well and you'll really influence your spouse to share their most authentic self. We listen for context by using compassion to imagine what they're going through and to form a thoughtful response in light of what your spouse is telling you – both verbally and nonverbally in their tone, body language and context of their day.

At this level of listening, I'd encourage you to go back to Level 2 as well. If you believe you're picking up on something they're *not saying*, ask them about it. We never want to assume.

PRACTICE

1. Self inventory using a scale of 1-10 (1 being an inability to listen well & 10 being flawless listening) for your 3 listening skills as defined in the above section. Take time to reflect on why you rated yourself this way.
2. Ask your partner to rate you and share the results with you during your weekly discipleship time.
3. Share with each other. Practice listening in all 3 forms to ensure you are using the skills with each other.
4. Bonus question. How does the skill of listening as discussed apply to your relationship with God?

Paying Attention: OBSERVING

Our culture encourages observation, not authenticity. Social media does not allow us to observe each other with no incentive to actually better relate to one another. We show a curated snapshot of time that's typically void of context.

We exchange deeply knowing one another for cheap entertainment.

When we live authentically with our spouse, we share lowlights and highlights in order to bring unity in our journey towards Christ. You likely see your spouse at the end of each day when you quickly check in between unpacking lunchboxes and rushing out the door for sports practice. But what if you had access to their 24-hour lives? What if instead of a highlight reel you had a live feed to observe them all day – what would we see?

How could we use this “live feed” to help encourage them towards fulfilling their Core Values?

Leading our spouse means listening and watching to make keen observations in order to help support their Core Values together.

So what do you look for?

- Consider their lowlights. Yes, start here. What causes them to compromise their values? Notice when and where. Who else is involved?
- Consider their highlights. When and where are they living their best life? What is the context and who else is involved?

PRACTICE.

Spouses that primarily listen and observe each other through email, texting, Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter just can't get the level of deep partnership that produces abundant fruit and helps each other live their best lives. You cannot achieve greater unity and influence in one another's journey toward Christ without intention and attentiveness. Spouses who make it a priority to support each other's Core Values do so by making keen observations for one another.

Keeping in mind both your Core Values and your Spouse's Core Values:

1. What are three (3) observations of your spouse you most admire?

2. Pray and ask God what is one (1) observation your spouse really needs to hear from you this week?

3. Discipleship. Share your reflections with your spouse. Listen well!

NEXT: Listening and observing in your family

Take what you've learned through the practices of paying attention, and apply these towards each of your kids.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Darren Ho empowers leaders to live without compromise by redeeming their Core Values.

He knows that all leaders face daily pressures from the world; leaving them feeling exhausted, frustrated, hesitant, and often like they're chasing after the wind. Darren founded The Restored Leader™ – a leadership coaching firm – in 2017 to help clients Redeem, Protect and Live™ their Core Values. As a result, leaders create authentic narratives, giving them confidence and joy in their leadership formation.

Originally from the Los Angeles area, Darren is a first generation American citizen. He and his wife and three children currently reside in Indianapolis, Indiana. Before that, the Ho family lived in Asia and Europe for 11 years and as a result, are passionate global citizens.

Darren earned his Bachelor of Science in Business from the University of Southern California. He received his Executive and Organisational Coach education from the International Executive Coaching and Leadership and is a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) of the International Coach Federation. He received his Master of Arts in Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in 2023.

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