

## Listening Poem

When I ask you to listen to me  
and you start giving advice,  
you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me  
and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't  
feel that way, you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me  
and you feel you have to do something to  
solve my problem, you have failed me,  
strange as that may seem.

Listen! All I asked was that you listen,  
not talk or do – just hear me.

Advice is cheap: 50 cents will get you both Dear Abby  
and Billy Graham in the same newspaper.  
And I can do that for myself. I'm not helpless.  
Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.

When you do something for me that I can and need  
to do for myself, you contribute to my fear  
and inadequacy.

But, when you accept as a simple fact that I do  
feel what I feel, no matter how irrational,  
then I can quit trying to convince you and can  
get about the business of understanding what's  
behind this irrational feeling.  
And when that's clear, the answers are obvious  
and I don't need advice.

Irrational feelings make sense when we understand  
what's behind them.

Perhaps that's why prayer works, sometimes, for some  
people – because God is mute, and he/she doesn't give  
advice to try to fix things. "They" just listen and  
let you work it out for yourself.

So please listen and just hear me. And, if you want to  
talk, wait a minute for your turn, and I'll listen to  
you.

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