



# Michelle's Musings

*On life, loss, health, homesteading, real estate and more*

## Listening Beyond the Words

Michelle Ellis

The book *The Character of the Lord's Worker* by Watchman Nee opens with a chapter called, "A Good Listener". The whole chapter is excellent, but one of my favorite lines is this one: "(You) should be able to discern three aspects ..while listening: **the words that are being uttered, the words that are being held back, and the words that are lying in the depth of the brother's spirit.**"

A little over a week after Nathan passed away in July, I was really waiting before the Lord and asking Him, "What do my younger sons need? What will help them the most?" Part of me had the crazy inclination to go buy them a mountain of material things - bikes and toys, etc, as if that would somehow counter the emotional pain that I couldn't protect them from. But deep down, I knew that wasn't the answer, and so every morning I asked the Lord, "**What do they really need?**" And one morning, He gave me a very clear answer - my 9 year old needed to get out of the house and have a break from us all. Sounds counterintuitive, but, you see, when he gets very stressed he has a problem called misophonia that becomes exacerbated, and chewing, sniffing, and sometimes even loud breathing of his family members becomes very painful to him. So I arranged for him to go stay with my sister, and he ended up staying there for a

week (Thank you, Sarah and family!). I also became clear that morning that **my older two**, ages 13 and 11, **needed the distraction of getting out and learning something practical, doing a 'manly' job.** I remembered buying a bike off of Craigslist, and I had been so impressed with the young man's character and how well he had fixed up the bike that I saved his number - and it was miraculously still in my phone 3 years later. I called Thomas and asked if he would be willing to apprentice my sons and teach them how to repair and rebuild bicycles. He was thrilled to have ready and willing learners, so I brought them over the next day.



The 11-year-old was beyond excited to go, and the 13-year-old dragged his feet a little, but once he discovered that Thomas also would teach them how to

work on cars, he was ALL in! And it turned out to be exactly what they needed. To see them laughing and chattering happily when I came to pick them up that day almost brought me to tears - it was only 8 days after Nathan had passed. And the tears were because I knew they needed this reprieve from the grief that encompassed our house, and I was so grateful that they had that short break.

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A few months ago, our family was on the receiving side of someone who listened beyond our words. At Nathan's viewing at the funeral home, one of our friends asked me, "What do you need? Do you have any practical needs?" I was too overwhelmed to think of any. Then he asked, "Do you need your yard mowed?" Well, of course we did – only we have a 2 acre lawn! It usually took my 4 boys a couple of days doing shifts with our push lawnmower to mow the front acre. Just a few days later, a group of 20+ friends descended on our property with several lawnmowers and knocked 2 acres out in a few hours. More than the



actual act of mowing was the comfort of having all our friends with us and filling our home for those hours! That dear friend – he listened. He listened to what I was not able to say.

A few years ago, I was showing a client around to see houses. After we had viewed several, I KNEW that she belonged in a brand-new home, so I scheduled a showing of a new KB home. And sure enough, as soon as we walked into that new house, she was so ecstatic, "This is IT!" She wasn't even considering a new home before then, but I was able to listen to her words and reactions, and became clear what her need was.

This type of listening at the deepest level involves listening to the still, small voice of the Lord within one's spirit while also listening to the words and observing the behaviour of the person. It is one of the sweetest experiences of the Lord we can have! How many times I have missed this experience due to the 'busy-ness' in my soul. May the Lord grant us all many more experiences of listening with Him to others' needs!

## Follow-up to 'Stay Tuned' from last newsletter

Michelle Ellis

Well, here's a funny thing - a few friends had the impression from my last newsletter that I will no longer be doing real estate. I think part of the reason was the statement I made that "I must help people on a deeper level than just real estate service." What I meant to say, was "than just *traditional* real estate service." Also, another friend quoted the line "**my way of making a living can be totally congruent with my life purpose.**", adding, "I *really* get why you are quitting real estate."

And I understand why people would think that. **Most people think of real estate as a sales job.** And tradi-

tional real estate does include a lot of 'sales activities' – cold-calling, self-promotion at networking events, buying 'leads' from Zillow/realtor.com/homes.com and calling them over & over until they agree to work with you, and bugging friends & family for business.

**All of that? Not in alignment with who I am.** And something that I refuse to do.

In addition to the sales tactics of most real estate agents, there are enough of them that are, well, less than ethical, that the industry has a reputation only slightly above that of a car salesman. That is actually one of the reasons I became a realtor – to protect others from unethical agents. But that's a story for another day.

So, I'm not leaving real estate. (Yay!) But *the way* I procure clients will be radically different than what most brokerages teach, and fully in line with my own values and calling.

And *the way* I help buyers & sellers will follow a different path than traditional real estate agents also, one which will reap them the best results and one that allows me to sleep at night with the certainty that I have given them the best service possible.

**To me, real estate is all about relationships, connecting, and caring about people. It's about having a genuine concern for the impact you are going to have on another person's life.** Because I love serving others and assisting them through the equally fun and stressful process of acquiring or selling a house, real estate is a natural fit for me.

## Our Newest Venture - NeuroOptimal

Remember last month when I said that **helping people is therapy** for my husband and myself? Well, in line with our decision to help as many people on as deep a level as possible, we have begun to offer NeuroOptimal Neurofeedback.

### Why NeuroOptimal?

In the Spring of 2016, my husband petitioned for the purchase of a NeuroOptimal professional system for our own family's use. And he won! I really wasn't convinced that we'd reap benefits, but his persistence won the day.

From the developer's website: "NeuroOptimal® is an advanced neuro-technology that offers training to the brain, enabling it to function at its best. It's math

ematically designed to communicate directly with your central nervous system and has been called 'the most effective bio-hack on this planet.' "NeuroOptimal has also been shown to increase **neuroplasticity** - the brain's ability to change.

Sounds pretty impressive, right? Well, the system arrived, and everyone in the family began work on the sessions. Then, slowly but surely, changes began to occur.

## *"NeuroOptimal increases neuroplasticity."*

As some of you may know, Enoch and Nathan were diagnosed as **dyslexic** several years ago. Every word they learned to recognize was only the result of showing them that word hundreds of times and sometimes forming the word out of clay. In a mere 6 weeks, our dyslexic 10-year-old jumped from a struggling early 2nd to a 6th grade reading level! I was delighted to see him at night hiding under the covers with a flashlight reading *My Side of the Mountain*! Nathan improved also, but he did far fewer sessions, so did not experience as dramatic results.

Our 8-year-old with **speech issues** was speaking clearly after 12 sessions.

My husband's **sleep improved** and his mood swings, including **depression**, leveled out dramatically.

And, unbeliever that I was, after 14 sessions, I experienced my **brain fog** lift and was so amazingly **focused and productive** that I accomplished more work in one day than I had in the last 2 weeks. **Creativity** was also off the charts, and writing flowed.

One of our children's tendencies to fly off the handle with little provocation was noticeably changed - he became more reasonable and able to talk when he became upset.

Not least, one of our children who exhibited many symptoms of **ADD** became able to concentrate on tasks and finish them, even 'boring' ones - a near miracle! Neurofeedback is approved by the American Academy of Pediatrics as a class I treatment for ADD/ADHD - but it's one thing to read that and quite another to see your child transform before your eyes.

On top of all that, in the immediate aftermath of our

son's drowning in July, my husband and I were experiencing many of the symptoms of **Acute Stress Disorder**. We couldn't sleep, and when we did, there were nightmares. We had no appetite. Moving through our days, navigating the most basic of daily activities - grocery shopping, laundry, preparing a meal for our other kids was nearly beyond our capacity. In the back of my mind, though, I knew that when we were ready, we had a tool available to us that would help us greatly. That time came 2 weeks after our son's death. And that tool was NeuroOptimal.



Our family had already seen such amazing benefits using this neurofeedback training over the last year, and I had read that this type of neurofeedback also helped people with

**PTSD** in a dramatic way. I knew that if it could help vets with PTSD, it would most likely help us. And it absolutely did.

During those first several weeks, we were upheld by the the Lord's grace, by the prayers of many, and by the love and care of our network of friends, neighbors and family, and we don't know how we could have made it through without all of that. In addition to that support, **NeuroOptimal was a God-send to help us even more.**

So, two weeks after Nathan's passing, I announced one morning that it was time for everyone in the family to do a NeuroOptimal session. That day, we all cycled through and did a session apiece.

Here's my experience - NeuroOptimal helped my brain to be elastic and adaptable to the extent that I could feel my grief, allow myself to be totally in the moment and cry when needed, and then move through the grief and come out on the other side. And do this over & over for the next 3 months, until the waves of grief came less frequently and less intensely.

Now, here I am, 4 months post, and in the last few weeks I have had a few moments of feeling sad to the point of tears. And then the rest of the time, I'm relatively happy. Also, the heaviness in my chest that I thought would never leave is usually gone. I sleep soundly, no nightmares. I don't dwell on 'coulda, shoulda' and 'if only' scenarios. I'm just moving on.

And yes, I still love my son. When something reminds me of him, I talk to him. I tell him I miss him. But I'm not

camping out in my grief. I can still function and move on. When I think of him, which is usually several times a day, I can smile. c.b. has had a similar experience, and so have our boys.

And this last experience is what propelled c.b. and me to make NeurOptimal (NeO) available to our community. **We cannot hoard such a precious resource. We want to share it with everyone!**

In September, we began running Facebook ads offering one free session so that people could experience NeO, and then a discount if they purchased a package of 10 or 20 sessions. We have given away many sessions! We discount the package because people experience the most benefit if they complete 20 sessions – it's like a work-out for your brain; the sessions build on each other. Problems that have existed for years or even from birth cannot be 'fixed' in one or two sessions. But **give NeurOptimal 20 sessions, and amazing things happen!**

**We would like to extend the offer to experience NeurOptimal to everyone receiving this newsletter.** The caveat is that the sessions are being offered in our home currently, which is a bit of a drive for some. But I can assure you, it will be well worth it!

It's a win-win - we will benefit from having a stream of people to our home (we love that!), and you can benefit from NeurOptimal!

Oh, and as a side note, because we are learning 'addicts', when c.b. and I purchased the NeO system in early 2016, we also completed a certification training, because we wanted to understand the intricacies of this machine and how it could do what it does.

If you are an analytical person and need more than anecdotal stories, you can visit [www.isnr.org](http://www.isnr.org) which has dozens of scientific studies showing the efficacy of neurofeedback for everything from autism to brain injuries.

On the practical side, c.b. will be the one running most sessions, and my job is to get the word out.

**If you think you or someone you know may benefit from NeurOptimal, please visit our website at [www.TexasBrainTraining.com](http://www.TexasBrainTraining.com) to learn more, or give c.b. or me a call.**

## From the Homestead

*Michelle Ellis*

Baby goats must be some of the cutest animals on the planet, and we have been blessed with 4 of them the last few months.

That's the good news. The other news is that goats are escape artists! So, we have spent many hours reinforcing our fences to keep "the kids" within our property.



But they are worth the effort, and the weather lately is beautiful - I'd rather get my exercise building fences with my children in the fresh, crisp air than going to a gym!

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## Have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

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"The trumpeters and musicians joined in unison to give **praise and thanks to Jehovah**. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to Jehovah and sang: **"He is good; His love endures forever."**

**2 Chron. 5:13**



**Thank you** for taking the time to read my newsletter! I hope you enjoy spending this time with me. Please, contact me with your ideas, feedback, questions, or just to say hi!

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