



The Listening Chair May 2026

Winfred Crouse was a tall and strong man, a man's man, but with a tender streak. He was my uncle and he lived in the parsonage about two-throws from South Fork Friends meetinghouse where he pastored. I was just a boy, but I remember things that boys notice. There were fishing rods hanging in the garage, a *Mustang* and a *Nova* in the gravel driveway, a collie named *King* and a cat named *Tom*. I also remember that Winfred had several metal chairs clustered together near the shade of a big oak. Of all the things I encountered in those visits to my uncle's house, it would be those metal chairs that stood out, and one in particular.

The chair I speak of was probably a hundred years old. It had been Winfred's mother's chair. Multiple coats of white paint clung to the metal. The legs of the chair were bent in such a way that it would rock, but they had curved so far over the years that when you sat down, your rear-end almost touched the ground. It was just right! But the significance of that chair was who sat in it. Winfred spent many hours in that chair. It was a listening chair.

Whenever Winfred was in his chair, with Scottie dog, *Max*, at his feet, he was listening. Sometimes he was listening to a church member who stopped by to share a burden. Other times he might be alone with the Master, listening to His promptings or to the soothing sounds of creation. Winfred was steeped in the Quaker ideal that listening was often better than speaking. That is what made him such a good sounding board for others. He would not speak into a conversation until he had heard your story, and your heart.

Without a listening chair, no one can remain vital and effective in ministry, or in life itself for that matter. Those who know that, and who live it out, become a magnet that draws others to themselves. People can feel the respect and compassion from one who has learned to listen.

Hebrews 12:2 tells us that after the ascension, Jesus Christ *sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*. And Romans 8:34 tells us this: *Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us*. Christ sits on the throne of majesty and honor constantly intervening on our behalf. Every prayer you have ever prayed has been heard by the One in the Listening Chair. He listens to every cry for help, every plea for forgiveness, every expression of gratitude, every invitation to come into a heart. Did you know that? He is listening. He is listening *for* you. He is listening *to* you. So, talk to Him. Pour out your heart to Him, and then after you have done that, spend some time listening to Him.

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