



COLLABORATIVE DISCIPLESHIP

2 Cultivate

How to Be a Good Listener

1 Connect

Summary Listening well is a critically important life and ministry skill. Developing it will help us with all our relationships. In order to grow in this area, becoming aware of good and poor listening habits is a great place to start. (See also Proverbs 18:13 and James 1:9–10.)

Recognize the habits of poor listeners.

Poor listeners:

- Change the subject away from whatever the other person is talking about.
- Bring the conversation back to themselves.
- Don't ask follow-up questions.
- Begin to talk about similar events in their past.
- Interrogate the people they talk to.
- Start thinking about how to respond before others are finished talking.
- Don't show interest in the conversation or the person they are listening to.
- Get distracted by their phone or some other screen.
- Don't make appropriate eye contact.
- Share their unsolicited advice or opinions.
- Make distracting "listening" sounds: "A-huh, a-huh, ya, ya, a-huh, ya, ya..."
- Start talking before others have finished what they were saying.
- Have negative non-verbals: arms crossed, head down, frowning, etc.

Discuss

Which of these poor listening habits are true of you?

Which poor listening habits have you seen in others in the group?

Which poor listening habits do you think will be easiest and hardest to break?

Practice the habits of good listeners.

Good listeners:

- Ask thoughtful questions about what others say.
"How did you feel when that happened?"
- Show interest.
"That's really interesting." "Tell me more."
- Ask followup questions.
"For you, what was the best part of that experience?"
- Show they are listening, but without making distracting sounds.

Share some examples of conversations you've had that were awful or awkward. What caused this?

3 Care

Since we last met, what happened as a result of expressing Christ's love to others?

How can you, or we, express Christ's love to others this week?

Here are a few ideas:

Pray God would meet their deepest needs.

Help meet a felt need they have.

Encourage them with a text, note or verbally.

Give them a thoughtful gift or buy them coffee.

Invite them to do something fun or meaningful.

Listen to their story.

Explore their thoughts on the gospel.

- Have positive non-verbals: smiles, eye contact, some head nods, etc.
- Seek to be an empathic, caring friend rather than someone with all the answers.
- Would rather listen, ask questions and encourage than seek to solve others' problems.

Discuss

Which good habits have you seen demonstrated by those in the group?

Which good habits do you think will be the easiest and hardest to form?

Who can you look to as a good example of a great listener?

The filling of the Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit.

Read Take some time together to read the article [How Not to Say the Wrong Thing](http://articles.latimes.com/2013/apr/07/opinion/la-oe-0407-silk-ring-theory-20130407). It has some good insight as to how to respond to others in crisis when it also affects you. (<http://articles.latimes.com/2013/apr/07/opinion/la-oe-0407-silk-ring-theory-20130407>)

Discuss What do you think of the “Comfort IN, Dump OUT” principle?

Listening well will help your spiritual conversations.

A great place to start is to listen to someone’s spiritual story. Ask something like:

- “What’s your spiritual story?”
- “What influences and events have shaped how you view spiritual things?”
- “Why do you think we’re here? What do you think is the purpose and meaning of life?”

Ask follow up questions to listen more, instead of adding your thoughts. A few examples are:

- “Tell me more about that.”
- “How did that experience influence how you viewed God?”
- “What were you hoping to discover?”
- “Have you ever sensed that God was trying to get your attention or wanted to communicate something to you?”
- “Have you ever had what might be called a spiritual experience?”
- “How has God been working in your life?”
- “How did you come to know God?”
- “If you could do anything without worrying about money or other people’s opinions, what would you do?”
- “What kind of activities refresh your soul?”
- “If God could do one thing for you, what would that be?”

Discuss Which of the above questions do you wish others would ask you?

Expressing the gospel can be done more effectively with good listening.

Start by initiating gospel conversations with the intent to listen. Ask something like:

- “I’d love to get your thoughts on what it means to know God personally. Would you mind sharing your honest thoughts with me?”

As you listen to others’ spiritual journeys, listen for:

- Where they would most appreciate the life-changing effects of the gospel.
- The hope of eternal life.
- Experiencing peace and joy in this life.

- Experiencing forgiveness and being free from shame and/or guilt.
- Experiencing justice or freedom from discrimination.
- Being free from the power of sin.
- Being able to love and forgive others.
- Being a part of a loving community, having a real relationship with God,
- Being a part of something larger than themselves, a larger story.
- Living a life of truth, meaning and purpose.

As you listen for barriers to the gospel that others have, listen for:

- **Ignorance:** They've just never heard, they don't know.
- **Misconceptions:** They believe something about Christianity that's not true.
- **Fear:** They fear losing community, wealth, identity, security, pleasure, a secret, an addiction, etc.
- **Pain:** Trauma and other painful life events can cause people to distrust God and doubt God's goodness.
- **Fruitless Christians:** No one wants to become like their unloving, self-righteous, angry, paranoid, or unhappy neighbors.

Other gospel-related questions:

- "What do you think about a loving God who wants to have a real relationship with you?"
- "What do you think prevents us from experiencing the love and freedom God desires us to have?"
- "Have you ever felt that the world shouldn't be the way it is?"
- "Do you ever feel like your life is missing something?"
- "What do you think Jesus was all about? Who was he and what did he do?"
- "If God wanted to communicate something to you, or get your attention, how might God do that?"

Discuss Which two or three questions above would you most want to ask others who don't know God?

Roleplay Pair up and practice good listening. Make mental notes of good and poor listening you observe and share that with the person you're paired with.

Pray In light of what we've discussed, how can we pray for each other right now?