

Lesson 4 – The Art of Listening

James 1:19

Wherefore my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.

Proverbs 18:13

To answer before listening is folly and shame.

To make disciples you must ask clarifying questions.

When we surrender our desire to be experts and our need to resolve differences immediately, we're going to see a huge barrier to listening dissolve.

When we give people space to arrive at their own answers, to sort out the questions in their own minds, and at their own speed, the result is worth the wait.

We listen because God listens! If I really care about what someone has to say, I'll listen.

Listening calls for an attitude of humility and grace. I surrender my desire to be heard and understood, in the interest of understanding the other person and that takes love.

Being a good listener will cause you to stand out in our self-centered world.

In order to become a better listener, we need to target three areas: 1) Our Face, 2) Our Focus, and 3) Our Feelings.

We listen with our face.

Good listeners communicate attention and interest. Another way to listen with your face is to watch non-verbal cues and maintain alert eye contact. You want your body language to communicate acceptance, interest, trust, and care.

Focused listeners avoid distraction.

Don't interrupt or interject lots of your own self-references and stories. Any questions asked are relevant and focused on the speaker. Good listeners pay close attention to clues that reveal deeper questions beneath.

Good listeners focus on the other person to find gems of truth, understanding, and value in their lives and discover where God is already at work.

Feelings.

A good listener is empathetic.

Empathy offers comfort, not answers. It tries to understand or even experience the other person's feelings with them. It's trying to understand what they are feeling and not trying to change their feelings, just trying to understand and be there.

There are 2 different kinds of listening.

Transactional listening - a one-way communication like in a news broadcast or like a Sunday School lesson.

Relational listening - allows for interaction between speaker and listener; fosters an exchange of feelings between people and not just a communication of ideas.

Reflecting - repeat back what you think you heard them say in a paraphrase. Reflecting is a way to make sure you are on the same page with who you are listening to.

Ask some follow-up questions - The right follow up questions can open up your conversation dramatically.

Then after you ask some open-ended questions - be willing to **WAIT for them to answer.**

Next you need to develop some curiosity.

Proverbs 20:5 can become a reality for us. "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out."

The cost of curiosity is that we must give up our need to control the conversation.

The good news from this lesson is that high quality listening skills can be learned and practiced. It begins when you act out of genuine care for other people and you become curious about their stories and their spiritual journeys.

It improves as we listen with our whole self, our face, our body and connect in a relational way and ask follow-up questions that help us understand the person better.