

Listening well

Value others as fellow human beings created in the image of God

Good listening is a special gift to give to any human being. When we listen well we give the other person attention, care and significance, gifts that are often neglected today.

- When we listen well to others, and show we understand them, there will be less misunderstandings, conflicts and hurts between us.
- When we truly listen to other people, and put our own thoughts and needs aside for a while, we will begin to know the other person in a whole new way.
- It is especially important that we look out for people whose voices are not being heard and valued – such as children, teenagers, people with disabilities, people who don't speak the language very well, vulnerable people, and those whose families taught them to be quiet (women from some cultures and families, etc.)

1. Pray first

- We listen best to others when we have listened first to God.
- Pray that each person you listen to will feel that you care for them.
- Pray that God will use you to bless and encourage others through your connections, conversations and prayer.
- Listen for the Holy Spirit to guide your listening, your thoughtful questions and your caring concern for those who come to speak with you.

2. Give the person your full attention

Give good eye contact if you are speaking face to face, or your full focus if you are speaking on the phone.

This shows that you are **interested** in them and that they are **valuable**.

3. Respond to the speaker by summarising what they have said:

- So you're saying that...?
- And then ... happened?

This shows how well you are **listening** and **paying attention** to them.

4. Be curious

- Ask questions that invite more information and ideas.

This shows that their story is **important** to you and **you are interested** in them.

5. Listen to their story with your heart as well as your mind

- Rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn. Romans 12:15
- Be empathic. Respond to their emotions and imagine what they might have been feeling.
- "That sounds really sad, frightening, troubling, painful, discouraging, etc."
- "What were you feeling right then?"
- "I'm sorry, that sounds so sad. It hurts me that you had to go through that. If I had been there, I would like to have comforted you by..."
- This shows that you **care about their feelings**.

6. Listen for the relational needs in their story:

- Comfort/consolation; acceptance/grace/forgiveness; affection/kindness; appreciation/gratitude; attention; respect; encouragement; security/safety; specialness;

support/help. These are all biblical ways of nurturing healthy relationships – each time we do something to meet one of these relational needs, we strengthen the caring bond between us. Jesus met other people’s relational needs, and He let other people meet His relational needs, too.

- Check out any possible relational needs. “It sounds as if you might need some extra support – how can I help you?” “That sounds so sad. What’s the best way for me to show I care?” “I really appreciated it when you did...” “I want you to know how glad I am that you are in my life.”

This shows that you **value the relationship** and want to **strengthen** it.

7. Explore their challenges

- How have you tried to solve this problem in the past? What worked well at that time?
- How is this problem affecting your life, and other people’s lives, right now?
- What are the obstacles that are preventing you from reaching your goals? If these obstacles were like blocks on a road, what else could you do to get to your destination?
- If this problem was no longer in your life, how would your life be different?

8. Follow up

- Do anything you promised to do.
- Check in by phone, text, etc.
- Ask what else you could do for them.

This shows that you **remember** their needs when you are apart from them.

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