

LISTENING INTRODUCTION

Defined as seeking to hear, heeding, listening is a skill we can develop that helps us become more “others” oriented. It involves conscious effort, focus and real attentiveness. In a finer sense, listening goes beyond sound or verbal interchange. It includes non-verbal messages relayed through tone of voice, body language, and the observation of behavior.

Scripture teaches:

*“Every one should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”
– James 1:19b*

When we carry on conversations, we are giving the person we are talking with an opportunity to feel important, to receive attention. When we listen, we learn. We learn about the person we engage with, and we learn something about ourselves.

Other words for listening are:

attend
consider
heed
hearken to

Paul Tillich said, “The first lesson of love is to listen.”

When we truly listen, and don't attempt to form our responses before the other person is finished speaking, we honor the one who is speaking. Actually, both respect and encouragement are elements of listening.

Explore this seed with the young people you teach, and truly give them active listening when they speak to you. Show them how to become good listeners.

LISTENING

Exercise 1

Paul wasn't sure why he felt so frustrated as he walked away from the conversation he had just had with Eric. Maybe it was because Eric never gave him much eye contact as he listened. Or maybe it was because Eric kept looking at his watch every few minutes. Paul had been trying to tell him the details of a very exciting basketball game he'd watched the night before. But, for some reason, Eric didn't seem very interested. Even though Paul finished the story, it seemed Eric just said, "See ya!" and walked away. He never made any comments about the game or anything.

Paul and Eric had been friends "forever". They grew up together because they lived across the street from each other. But lately, Paul had noticed that Eric seemed to want to spend less and less time together, and today when he tried to carry on a conversation it hadn't gone well at all.

How we listen tells a lot about how much we treasure the person we are talking to. The question is, how well do you listen?

Do you L V V the people you listen to? That means, do you:

L =look at them

V= give verbal approval

V=give visual approval

Choose a partner, and talk about what you did last night, taking turns being the listener and the one speaking. Give them your full attention by looking at them, saying things like, "Sure." "That's cool." "Uh- huh." and give them visual approval by nodding your head or smiling. Practice these skills and become a good listener.

LISTENING

Exercise 2

Polly and Liz decided it would be fun to go to the Ice Cream Parlor after swimming. It was a sizzling day, and the cool, air-conditioned restaurant was inviting. They got their blizzards and sat down in a booth to talk. Just as they started their conversation, Polly's cell phone rang. She looked at the caller ID and decided not to answer right then. After all, she came here to be with Liz. The two girls chatted a while and slowly ate their ice cream, then in about four minutes Liz's cell rang. She answered and for the next ten minutes she talked to her friend Emily, while Polly sat across from her waiting.

"I wouldn't do what Liz is doing," Polly thought, "How can I tell her that it is rude to do this without offending her?" So, what would you do if you were Polly? What would you say to Liz once she ended her cell phone conversation?

When we don't offer our friends our undivided attention, we insult them. Are you guilty of this sort of unkindness? Think how you respond to people you are with.

Role play a similar situation with someone and do the right thing and then and wrong thing. Ask the other person how it makes them feel to be ignored. Tell them how it makes you feel.

Learn to be a good listener.

LISTENING

Exercise 3

Leo, Max and Jake sat on the river bank with their fishing poles in their hands and their lines in the water. It was one of those perfect summer days with blue sky and a slight breeze. Couldn't have asked for better. Jake was telling his friends about the new video game his dad had just given him, and he was pretty excited about it. He was explaining how the race cars zoomed around the track, and all about the crashes, blow-by-blow. Max's eyes sparkled as he smiled and nodded – trying to visualize what his friend was telling him. Leo, however, seemed totally focused on his fishing pole, and didn't respond to Jake at all.

What conclusions would Max come to by how differently the two boys responded to him? Which friend would you want to be listening to your excitement about your new video game?

When you are listening to someone who is doing the talking, how do you respond?

When you are the one talking, what kind of response to do you look for?

We have two ears and only one mouth. Do you think maybe that gives us a clue about how important it is to be a good listener?