

# LEARNING TO LISTEN

How to engage effectively with the people you meet

AG

Series I Session 10

## Play the Listening Game

**How does this game make you feel (both as the listener and the talker)?**

**Why is listening important in evangelism?**



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**“Without good listening skills we cannot appreciate and understand the barriers each individual has in coming to Christ.”**

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### PROVERBS ABOUT LISTENING

10:19 “When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.”

15:28 “The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil.”

17:28 “Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.”

18:2 “A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.”

18:13 “He who answers before listening- that is his folly and shame.”

18:15 “The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out.”

20:5 “The purposes of a man’s heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.”

Listening is not passive. It is not the same as being silent, switching off or even asking a ton of questions. Listening requires entering actively and imaginatively into another persons situation and trying to understand a frame of reference different from your own. It’s a bit like being a learner.

Listening is an act of withdrawal, a laying down of your own agenda. If we are desperately trying to communicate something, we are unable to hear them. If we are mulling over what we are going to say next, we are not listening to them.

**Read John 3:16.** Everything in this verse is certain. It has happened. God does love us. He did send his only Son to die for us. And He did this so that we can have eternal life. It's all true, whether they agree with it or not. We don't need to convince them of its truth for it to be true. Our eternal life is not in jeopardy if they disagree with us. The only thing in this verse that is uncertain is their belief. We must believe in order to get eternal life. Our focus in evangelism should be their belief and their journey to the Cross. Initially dropping our agenda enables us to truly understand and connect with their context.

Listening is not coming up with a creative solution. No one likes to be fixed. It is not coming up with your own story where something similar happened.

Listening is not an airy-fairy theoretical concept. It is extremely practical and it's a skill you can learn.

## The Listening Model

**Understand** - Take the time to listen carefully to what they are saying. Don't assume that their answer is the same as everyone else you've asked the question to. Even if it sounds similar, to them it will be unique.

**Mirror** - Summarise their answer in one sentence and let them adjust it and make it more accurate. This will help you understand what they are saying, and help them feel that you care about their opinions.

**Validate** - Once people are sharing important personal opinions, we need to show extreme care in how we respond to them. Moving on immediately could offend them in that we are ignoring something very significant to them. Saying something like, "I understand where you're coming from" or "that's a legitimate point" conveys understanding and shows that you aren't there to judge.

**Empathise** - This is hard to describe, but it essentially involves sharing in their emotional response to what they have communicated. This doesn't mean that you necessarily agree with them, but will convey a sense of partnership, that they and you are in this together. If you have effectively mirrored and validated what they are saying, you will probably have also managed to empathise with them.

### Example:

I refuse to believe in a god that makes good people to go to hell.

*Are you saying that you don't think a loving god would allow people who appear to be good in this life to go to hell?*

Yeah. My grandad died a year ago. He was a great man, who loved everyone, and everyone loved him, but he didn't believe in God. If there is a god, how could he let him go to hell?

*OK, so you feel that if God exists, all good people should go to heaven?*

Yeah.

*Cool. So how would you define a 'good person'? Is there a certain level of 'goodness', above which everyone goes to heaven?*

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***“Effective listening is an acquired skill; it is vital in our communication of Christ’s love to others.”***

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***Practice listening in pairs. Talk about anything, but be sure to ask good questions and to follow the listening model.***

