

THE
DISCIPLESHIP
PLACE

Jesus the Master Teacher



SESSION 13

How Do You Teach?
Listen to Adults and Use Their Responses

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How Do You Teach? Listen to Adults and Use Their Responses

SESSION OVERVIEW

What is Active Listening?

How Do You Provide Feedback?

**How Did Jesus Listen?
An Example**

Application

Exam

Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, you should be able to:

- Define and apply active listening methods
- List the responses of a facilitator during a group discussion and connect it to feedback suggestions
- Analyze the responses that Jesus used when reacting to the questions, answers, or comments of His disciples.

How Do You Teach? Listen to Adults and Use Their Responses



INTRODUCTION

JOURNALING

Think about the times someone has really listened to you and how it made you feel. Contrast that with a time when you felt the person you were having conversation with wasn't listening to you. Describe your feelings in both of those cases. Reflect on these feelings as you read this session on actively listening to adults. Think about how you can listen to those family, friends, and others in your life and how you can see listening as giving you an opportunity to show Christ to others.

AN INTERRUPTION AND KIWI AIRLINES

I am a schedule person. I make daily schedules, weekly schedules, monthly schedules, and yes even 10-year plans! Almost 20 years ago, my schedule was dramatically interrupted. I was sitting in an airport in Newark on the 4th leg of a 6-leg, 5-state schedule. I was tired of work, and I missed my dad who had recently died. However, this flight was especially exciting because I was going to see my daughter, a junior at Olivet Nazarene University, even though I had just one day to be with her. Unfortunately, the flight was delayed for six more hours because of "weather and mechanical difficulties," and now I was finally assigned to my third airline . . . an airline I had never heard of . . . Kiwi airlines. I was mad! I was impatient! I was tired of talking about math. AND I was especially tired of listening to teachers and administrators talk about math. I didn't want to talk to anyone. In fact, I had a silence covenant: I was not going to talk with anyone! I just wanted to get to Chicago. When we finally boarded the plane at 10:00 pm, all rows were completely filled with the exception of my row. I was excited! In fact, I deserved the three seats! There was room for my bags and I could stretch out! Just as the plane was getting ready to take off, the flight attendant explained that one more passenger needed a seat. I looked up and saw a beautiful, yet clearly distressed woman holding more bags than she should have on a plane, and I knew my excitement was short-lived. She struggled to her window seat, moved my bags, hit me with one of them, and then sat down. She then broke my "silence covenant" and asked me why I was going to Chicago. I told her I was on my way to see my daughter at Olivet Nazarene University. I then turned away and thought, "Now, I am done listening! Yeah!"

After a short silence, she said, “I know Nazarene. In fact, the only man that made a positive difference in my life was a Nazarene minister.” She then went on to explain that her life was a total catastrophe. With tears streaming down her face, she explained that she had decided her life was just not worth living. In fact, she had just left her home and job in New Jersey and was going to see her family one last time. In her mind, her life was over. At that moment, my covenant of silence was over. I quietly said, “My dad was a Nazarene minister. In fact, he pastored Chicago First Church many years ago for just a short time. Who was the Nazarene minister that made a difference in you?” She replied, “Bill Varian!” With tears now streaming down my face, I said, “That was my Dad!” For the next four hours, we talked, shared experiences, prayed, cried, and prayed some more. When we arrived in Chicago, we parted ways as changed people . . . both of us had experienced the grace, mercy, and love of God, and we were never the same again! God had interrupted our journeys. He sat in the middle seat and prompted me to listen. He brought us together!

Do you see how my “silence covenant” almost ruined two blessed experiences for both my flight partner and myself? I needed to really listen to her, and when I did, God spoke in a miraculous way. Praise His Name!

WHAT IS ACTIVE LISTENING?

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Active listening is defined as “The act of mindfully hearing and attempting to comprehend the **meaning** of words spoken by another in a conversation or speech.” As teachers of the Word, this is a skill all of us need to develop. It is a critical skill if we are to facilitate discussions (Session 12), it is a critical skill if we are to communicate God’s truth and grace (Session 2), it is a critical skill if we are to teach for change (Session 4), and it is a critical skill if we are to teach all those adults with different needs, hurts, and joys (Session 8).

Frankly, I am a terrible listener. I learned long ago that I often show disrespect to those who are speaking by thinking of what they will say next and formulating my response BEFORE they are even finished with their statements. How rude of me! Because I often must view myself teaching on videos, I have even seen me mouthing my response while another person is speaking. Ugh!

So rather than hear my ideas about listening, let’s begin first with just a few scriptures that talk about listening as well as a few other sources. Then, we can talk about the attributes that we can develop as we work on this necessary skill.

- From the Old Testament:
 - “A wise man will hear and increase in learning.” Proverbs 1:5a
 - “Then the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!’ and Samuel said, ‘Speak, for your servant is listening.’” 1 Samuel 3:10
 - “Listen, all... thus says the LORD to you, ‘Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God’s.” 2 Chronicles 20:15
 - “Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you; O Israel, if you would listen to Me!” Psalm 81:8
- From the New Testament:
 - “After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, ‘Hear and understand.’” Matthew 15:10.
 - “After He called the crowd to Him again, He began saying to them, ‘Listen to Me, all of you, and understand.’” Mark 7:14.


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- “Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!’” Luke 9:35
- “The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.” Luke 10:16
- “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” John 10:27
- “Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, ‘Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen.’” Acts 13:16
- “Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen.” Acts 28:28
- “This you know, my beloved brethren but everyone must be quick to hear slow to speak and slow to anger” James 1:19
- From other sources –
 - “One of the best ways to persuade others is with your ears by listening to them.” Dean Rusk
 - “He understands badly who listens badly.” Welsh proverb
 - “From listening comes wisdom, and from speaking repentance.” Italian proverb

Do you see the many connections between listening and understanding? Do you also see that listening appears to be an attribute that demonstrates honor and respect for the person or persons to whom you are listening? Apparently, if we really want to understand and gain wisdom or knowledge, we must listen to God as well as to those we encounter if they are to see Christ in us.

From an educational perspective, how do we develop the skill of listening? Let’s look at some specific methods, knowing that these methods are easier to describe than they are to practice. Listening is a skill that develops over time if you intentionally focus and practice to improve.

1. Pay attention to the speaker: This seems obvious but often it is the most difficult part to practice. To truly listen to someone, you must purposefully put aside all distractions, both thoughts and other factors, like other conversations, movements, or your phone (oops... I’m meddling now!). You need to look at the speaker directly and show that you are

 NOTES

attending to only him and not looking for another *better* speaker. Don't mentally prepare how you will respond to the speaker, especially while he is still speaking (UH OH). Finally, listen to the speaker's body language, their voice intonations (forceful or insecure), their arm positions (open or closed), or their stance location (close or distance). These are all characteristics that emails or tweets do not normally tell you, at least not with total accuracy.

2. Show that you are listening: Again, this seems obvious, but if your body language does not demonstrate that you are listening, the speaker will assume that you are not interested in listening to him or her. You should maintain body language such as eye contact, leaning in, or nodding occasionally, so you can attend better to what the speaker is saying. You can smile, use other thoughtful expressions (not anger), or even jot down a note that you want to remember. You can keep an open posture (hands and arms open and not crossed) and encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments. Please know that you do not need to exaggerate these motions or even indicate agreement. However, you need to demonstrate in some way that you are listening.
3. Respond verbally: It is important that you indicate in some way that you have heard what a speaker has said during a group discussion. It can be a simple acknowledgement, e.g., "yes, I think Jennifer had a similar idea that she mentioned a few minutes ago," or a recognition that what has been said was of value, e.g., "interesting idea and one from a different perspective." It can also be a statement that has nothing to do with the topic and somehow you can try to connect it with the topic. If the idea can't be connected in any way, I will often put it on the board (often called the "parking lot" for ideas) or in my notes for discussion later. The important thing is to acknowledge in some way that a group member has contributed to the discussion. There are many other ways to respond and give feedback to a contribution, and several different methods will be described in the next section. Whatever the case, please listen actively to group members and respond in thoughtful ways to what they say.

HOW DO YOU PROVIDE FEEDBACK?



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The most important attribute of feedback is that you **MUST** give it! What does feedback mean? In its most primitive state, it means giving back “something” to someone that will “feed” their contribution, i.e., if I want more contributions, you will feed someone with “food” so that he will continue to contribute. Think for just a minute how you would react if your listener just ignored an opinion or suggestion you make to that person. From an educational perspective, feedback is defined as “an essential part of education that helps learners to maximize their potential, raise their awareness of strengths and areas for improvement, and identify actions to be taken to improve performance.” Educational research supports the idea that students would prefer to be noticed for “good or bad” rather than being ignored. So, as a teacher, if you want your students to continue to be involved in a discussion and “maximize their potential” and “improve their performance” in the study of God’s Word, you should provide feedback.

There are many ways that you can provide feedback. As you read the following suggestions, please note that feedback does not need to be judgmental or positive or negative; in some cases, it is just an acknowledgement that you heard the statement, question, or response.

- Restate or paraphrase the response.
- Summarize the response by stating what you understood.
- Make a suggestion about other possible responses.
- Be selective about the response, i.e., focus on only one aspect.
- Make meaningful connections.
- Motivate learners by asking them to further investigate the issue.
- Suggest that the response be shared with other groups because of its uniqueness.
- Ask a question to clarify the response.
- Thank the responder for his/her openness.
- Simply acknowledge the response, e.g., I heard your concern.
- Be open and candid in your response.
- Assert your opinions with respect.

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- Treat the other person in a way that you think he or she would wish to be treated.
- Allow the student to finish his or her idea before you respond.
- If necessary, remind the responder of the parameters for responses.

As you can see, there are many possible ways that you can provide feedback to students in your Bible study group. Jesus' second greatest commandment to "love others as yourself" is one that should serve as an impetus for Godly responses.

HOW DID JESUS LISTEN? AN EXAMPLE



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Luke records in chapter 24, verses 13-35 of his gospel a beautiful story of the “Listening Jesus.” I believe the story itself is a clear example of how Jesus listened to others, so I have chosen to simply rephrase the story and italicize the phrases that in my opinion relate directly to listening.

Two men were traveling to a village called Emmaus. They talked of all the things which had happened. So it was, while *they conversed and reasoned* that Jesus Himself *drew near and went with them*. Cleopas said to Him, “Are you the ONLY stranger in Jerusalem, and have YOU not known the things which happened there in these days?” Jesus did not choose to explain his knowledge but rather *responded simply*, “What things?” He listened *without interrupting* to their summaries of what had happened and then, “expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” When He indicated that He would have gone farther, *they invited him to stay*. “And He *went in to stay with them*.” He *interrupted his journey, sat at the table with them*, “He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then *their eyes were opened* and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.

CLOSING THOUGHT

Today, as I was writing this last section of this session, I was talking on the phone to my daughter about weekend plans, pretending to listen to my husband’s question about our dinner plans, and hearing a signal that I had received an important message from my publisher. I had to smile. This is what happens to me (and probably to you as well) all the time. Interruptions! I started out this session by talking about an interruption and my reluctance to listen, which almost caused me to miss a blessing that I will never forget. In *The Wisdom of Tenderness*, Brennan Manning states, “We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. It is a strange fact that Christians and even ministers frequently consider their work so important and urgent that they will allow nothing to disturb them. It is part of the discipline of humility that we must not spare our hand where it can perform service and that we do not assume that our schedule is our own to manage but allow it to be arranged by God” (Manning, 2002, pg 74-75, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, NY; partially quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s writings in *Life Together*, New York: Harper & Row, 1954).

**NOTES**

Allow me to state my favorite verses from Proverbs with some amplified comments . . . “Trust in the Lord with all thy heart.” He will never disappoint you. “Lean not unto thine own understanding.” Yes, as we have studied, you’ve learned much and your understanding has increased, but I guarantee your knowledge will not be enough to face the interruptions you will experience. “In all thy ways acknowledge Him,” your Creator, the One who couldn’t love you more or less no matter what you did! “And He will direct your path,” sometimes through silence when He expects you to do what you know to do, sometimes through open/closed doors, sometimes with a direct Word, and yes, sometimes with an interruption that causes you to really listen. My prayer is, “Lord, help me to see interruptions as opportunities to listen to You and others instead of seeing them as inconveniences.”

APPLICATION



NOTES

Be prepared to share your three application activities with your mentor.

1. Identify your own listening skills and compare/contrast them to the three methods suggested in the section on active listening.
2. Listen to an audio recording or watch the video of a group discussion that occurred in a recent Bible study. List some of the facilitator's responses and connect each of them to the feedback suggestions.
3. Select an example of a conversation or discussion that Jesus had with His disciples. Analyze Jesus' reactions to the questions, answers, or comments of His disciples.

JOURNALING

Consider some of the following when journaling:

- One idea, Bible verse, or story that made an impression on me today was . . .
- A new idea I encountered today is . . .
- One thing that made me uncomfortable today was . . .
- The prayer I most want to pray right now is . . .

EXAM



NOTES

1. Active listening is the act of mindfully hearing and attempting to comprehend the meaning of words spoken by another person.
 - A. True
 - B. False
2. Proverbs 1:5a says that a wise man will _____ and increase in learning.
 - A. speak
 - B. think
 - C. judge
 - D. strategize
 - E. none of the above
3. To listen well is to show honor and respect for the other person.
 - A. True
 - B. False
4. Which of the below are ways to demonstrate you are listening.
 - A. Look up and away to show you are deep in thought.
 - B. Nod your head occasionally.
 - C. Lean in to demonstrate interest.
 - D. a and c
 - E. b and c
5. When listening, it is not respectful to clarify by asking questions.
 - A. True
 - B. False

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT



NOTES

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. Give your mentor your responses to application activities 2 and 3. Discuss and identify any questions or difficulties you had identifying ideas that connected to the suggestions in the session. Talk about any additional suggestions you might have for listening skills or responses.
2. Discuss application activity one focusing on your listening skills and how they can be improved. Ask your mentor to share his perception of listening skills, yours as well as his. Set some goals for yourself in regard to listening to your students.