

Care like Jesus through compassionate listening

To help evaluate and improve your listening skills to care well, use these questions to explore your blind spots when it comes to listening.

- 1) When someone is talking to you, are you able to summarize the words back to them with kindness and precision? Would they understand and appreciate your characterization?

- 2) When you listen, are you thinking about what you want to say or how to build a deeper understanding?

- 3) How often do you interrupt someone when they speak? What do you think drives this impulse? Did your communication skills develop in an environment where interrupting one another or talking over each other was the norm? Are there certain selfish desires that arise for you in conversation that push you toward interrupting?

- 4) Do you have a hard time listening whenever someone talks with a certain style? What style of speaking is easiest for you to listen to, and what is more challenging? (For example, do you prefer slow speakers or fast talkers? Do you prefer someone who speaks for a long time without pausing or those who share more briefly? Do you have difficulty listening when someone has a speech or language impairment? etc.)? Why do you think this is the case?

- 5) What types of questions do you ask when talking with others? How would someone characterize your questions (e.g., they demonstrate care, they seek to understand, they demand answers, they interrogate, they intimidate, they reveal you weren't listening)?

- 6) What goals do you have when you start a conversation? How does listening help you achieve those goals? Where does "understanding someone" rank in terms of listening goals? What other goals do you currently have that might need to be modified? How does your goal in listening ultimately point them back to Christ?

- 7) Where do your eyes go in conversation? What do you tend to look at when someone else is speaking (e.g., clocks, people who walk by, other people, your phone)? When was the last time you intentionally made eye contact during a conversation to show that you were present with them and that they had your undivided attention?

- 8) What does your body language communicate to the person you are listening to? Do you smile, nod your head, lean in? Do you roll your eyes, shake your head, turn your back, do other things? How does your attention and body language communicate that you are interested in what is being shared?

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9) How do you handle moments when someone is speaking to you and another person walks up and interrupts? What might it look like to respond in a way that shows priority to the person speaking and compassion to the one interrupting?

10) How often do you feel hurried in conversation? What types of desires and outside stressors tempt you to feel rushed when speaking with someone?

11) What topics are most sensitive for you? If someone begins sharing on a topic that is sensitive to you, how might you internally address your own emotional response? How might you protect yourself from jumping into a debate and continue to prioritize understanding the individual?

12) How do you listen and respond in moments when a person is critical of you or the church. When do your listening priorities shift away from the goal of understanding someone and instead toward playing offense or defense in the conversation?

13) When you are tired, on a tight schedule, or have an urgent need, how do you handle conversations that arise? What other factors in your life tend to complicate your ability to share a quality conversation with someone?

14) What conversational skills do you use to communicate your trustworthiness to someone? Who has demonstrated their trustworthiness to you in how they have listened and cared for you in conversation? What do you hope to imitate more?

15) How do you handle another person's emotions when they open up to you? What does it look like for you to rejoice with someone who rejoices or to weep with someone who is weeping?

16) When you pray for someone, are you able to restate the major themes of their heart and life that they entrusted to you and bring them before the Lord?

This week talk to your spouse or a trusted friend about what God might be revealing in your heart and what areas of listening and empathy you want to grow in. Show them your answers and invite them to offer any additional feedback to help you grow in this area. Ask your spouse or friend these questions about yourself to help¹.

¹ These questions were taken and revised from <https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2023/01/13/listening-quiz-for-counselors/>.