



1. Are you a good listener? Why do you think so or not think so?
2. Why is listening so important?

²¹The wise in heart will be called **understanding**, And sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness. ²²**Understanding** is a fountain of life to one who has it, But the discipline of fools is folly. ²³The heart of the wise instructs his mouth And adds persuasiveness to his lips ²⁴Pleasant words are a honeycomb, **Sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.** (Prov. 16:21-24)

⁴⁵When they did not find [Jesus], they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. ⁴⁶Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both **listening** to them and **asking them questions**. ⁴⁷And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. (Luke 2:45-47)

⁵A plan in the heart of a man is like deep water, But a man of **understanding** draws it out. (Prov. 20:5)

He who **gives an answer before he hears**, It is folly and shame to him. (Prov. 18:13)

The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and **questions** him. (Prov. 18:17)

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be **quick to listen, slow to speak** and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. (Jas. 1:19-20)

You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an **understanding** way ... so that your prayers will not be hindered. (1 Pet. 3:8)

- a. Listening is a form of love. You love others when you listen to others.
- b. "Listening is much more than allowing another to talk while waiting for a chance to respond. Listening is paying full attention to others and welcoming them into our very beings. The beauty of listening is that, those who are listened to start feeling accepted, start taking their words more seriously and discovering their own true selves. Listening is a form of spiritual hospitality by which you invite strangers to become friends, to get to know their inner selves more fully, and even to dare to be silent with you."¹
- c. Good listening leads to good questions which leads to good understanding.
- d. **Gospel Understanding = Gospel Listening + Gospel Exploration²**

God has given us a straightforward, relational way of understanding one another: (1) listening to the heart and (2) drawing out the heart by asking probing questions. We can

¹ Henri Nouwen, Daily Meditation for March 11, 2007

² Gospel Exploration = Drawing Out the Heart (cf. Prov. 20:5); Asking Exploring Questions



understand one another in general through God's word (cf. Heb. 4:12) and in specific and personal ways through listening and drawing out the heart with gospel intentionality.

3. How should I listen? What makes a good listener?

Exercise—Describe what a good listener is and does ...

a. A good listener is ...

b. A good listener (does) ...

c. Practically, how do I listen?

i. With your **ears**—listen to everything that is being said

ii. With your **eyes**—listen to everything being said by body, facial, and voice

iii. With your **heart**—listen to everything that is not being said. Imagine yourself in their situation

d. Do's and Don'ts of Listening

i. **Do...**

1. Maintain eye contact, even as you take notes

2. Let people know you understand what they are saying (even if you disagree)

3. Acknowledge what they are saying, especially if something significant

ii. **Don't ...**

1. Interrupt when people are speaking ... don't try to finish their sentences.

2. Change the focus to you

e. "Good listening is not a technique that you can learn ... [but] is a product of a loving heart.... We listen well when we are genuinely interested in people and concerned for them."³

f. **Gospel Counseling Requires Love.**

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (1 Cor. 13:4-7)

Love is patient and kind, not rude

- When we lack long-suffering, we lose patience with people because they "just don't get the obvious" and they are making such slow progress.
- When we are not patient with whom we listen, we can be harsh in attitude and rude in our approach.

³ Direct quotes from Porterbrook—Pastoral Care, Part 3, p. 7.



- We get tired of listening to the “same old struggle” and we replace questions with teaching because we think the more we talk and teach, the quicker they learn and the quicker they will progress.
- We are called to bear one another’s burdens with patience, gentleness, and grace.
- What does it look like to listen and draw out the heart with patience and kindness?
- Good listening starts with realizing how God loves you. God gives us the following verses to instruct us how we should approach someone struggling with sin and suffering. We are not called to “beat them into submission,” but to stir their affections for God and remind them who they are in Christ.

*¹You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. ²Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. ³So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? ⁴**Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?** (Rom. 2:1-4)*

*¹Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should **restore him gently**. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. ²Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. ³If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, ⁵for each one should carry his own load. (Gal. 6:1-5)*

*²⁴And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be **kind** to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. ²⁵Those who oppose him he must **gently instruct**, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. (2 Tim. 2:24-26)*

*²⁹Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, **so that it will give grace to those who hear**. (Eph. 4:29)*

Love is not jealous, does not envy, is not self-seeking

- As we counsel, our minds can wonder with envy or jealousy, and we get pre-occupied with our own life and circumstances.
- We can explore and listen for “juicy” details of their lives in a voyeuristic manner as we seek out self-pleasure.
- We can listen or draw out information while looking for opportunities for self-promotion and our counseling can become more about our own or self-gain rather than ministering to the other person.
- What does it look like to listen and draw out the heart with focus on the other and not on yourself?

Love does not boast, it is not proud and arrogant

- Pride in counseling often takes the form of self-righteousness and contempt. We can get disgusted at the people we are trying to help as we judge their actions as being far different from our own.



- We listen with bias due to our pre-judgment and our questions can become a series of attacks as we try to take the place of God in regard to conviction and confession of sin. We can spend time talking about our sins as if they are all in the past, thus implying we have arrived and they haven't. We need to believe we are no different from those we're counseling.
- We merely look for some key words that match our pre-conceived notions based on our favorite theological truths or on our own experience.
- An arrogant counseling approach can insist on our own agenda—not God's or the person we are trying to help. We may power through each session with our "tried and true" methods, verses, and conclusions regardless of the details of the person's life.
- We listen to confirm our own assumptions, and then move on to the next question, as if we are following a checklist or we move on because of our impatience.
- What does it look like to listen and draw out the heart with humility?

Love is not easily angered and keeps no records of wrong

- It is hard to counsel with wisdom and grace if you are angry, bitter, or resentful towards anyone, especially the one you are counseling.
- Those you are trying to help can refuse to listen to your counsel, not complete homework assignments, or even turn on you because they are pushing away from the gospel truths that are pushing into their willful desires.
- If you are struggling with anger and unforgiveness towards someone in your own life, you will less likely encourage others to do the same given your own unbelief, lack of courage and desire to see gospel love and forgiveness do its redemptive work in you and others.
- Anger and bitterness makes you deaf, blind, and uncaring.
- What does it look like to listen and draw out the heart free from anger and bitterness?

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth

- Ever cheer for the vigilante in the movie as he is killing bad guys as they slipped through the judicial system? What about laughing hysterically at crude, disgusting, and degrading humor? These are simple examples of delighting in evil.
- More than likely, you will not listen for evidences God's grace at work, offer the gospel with hope and love, and celebrate God's work of repentance in someone's life if you are enjoying the struggle of his sexual sin or you are savoring the adulterer's shame because you think she deserves it.
- What does it look like to listen and draw out the heart free from delight in evil but rejoicing with the truth?

Love always (protects, bears all, endures), always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres

- Do you sometimes struggle to **put up** with someone who just doesn't get it? You dread seeing them as you anticipate they will repeat the same old thing. You forget God has entrusted him to your care and He called you to help fight for his soul.
- How do you counsel someone whom you **don't trust**? What do you say to a husband who is **struggling to trust** his wife ever again because of her adultery?
- Have you ever **given up hope** that God can change a person because of their life-long cynicism, defensiveness, and negativity?
- When we get weary for whatever reason, we tend to become apathetic, passive, and **no longer take initiative to pursue** someone in love. Praise God that His love and goodness pursues us all the days of our lives (cf. Ps. 23:6)!
- God's power in the midst of our weakness and weariness.



"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:9-10)

- What does it look like to listen and draw out the heart with continual endurance and hope?
4. What do I listen for? Depends on your purpose for listening.
- a. What is the purpose of Gospel Counseling?

*A way of loving one another by **understanding** the struggles of unbelief in one another in the midst of sin and suffering through listening to and drawing out the heart, while **proclaiming** how Christ and His gospel truths apply in deeply personal and specific ways, so that we can live out and grow in the gospel by faith in community, by grace and the power of the Holy Spirit.*

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- b. **Gospel Counseling = Gospel Understanding + Gospel Proclamation**
- c. When we listen to others, we need to see what competes with them **listening to God** and others, which in turn, keeps them from **loving God** and others.
- d. Listen for how a person's life **reflects + conflicts** with the gospel via "PACCSS". Remember you are sitting with God's artwork (we are made to reflect God)
 - i. Portrait—the person and his/her overall story
 - ii. Accents = significant occurrences that stand out—both trials and blessings
 - iii. Context—embedded story flows from FOO, marriage, God's Story
 - iv. Colors
 - 1. **Thinking Words**—"I can't go on," "Why is this so hard?"
 - 2. **Emotional Words**—"I am scared ... fearful ... angry ... sad"
 - 3. **Action/Will Words**—"She made me mad so I screamed at her," "After I was fired, I got drunk."
 - 4. **God-talk**—"He will never forgive me!" "Prayer doesn't work." "Why did God let this happen!" "Why doesn't God change me!"
 - 5. **Other-talk**—"Everyone always leaves me!" "I can't stand stupid people!"



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6. **Self-talk**—“No one loves me.” “I always fail.” “I feel so worthless.”
- v. **Structure (of the Gospel)**—listen for evidences of ...
 1. **False Gospels = Unbeliefs and Lies**
 2. **Grace**—anyway and everywhere
 3. **Sin & Suffering**
 4. **Faith & Repentance**
 5. **Love & Forgiveness**
- vi. **Strokes = Heart (Thoughts, Emotions, Actions/Will) & Relational patterns and themes related to God, Others, and Self.**