



Developing an Effective Leadership Culture:

Listening

Loving People with Your Ears

I called on Your name, O LORD, Out of the lowest pit. You have heard my voice, "Do not hide Your ear from my prayer for relief, From my cry for help." You drew near when I called on you; You said, "Do not fear!" O Lord, You have pleaded my soul's cause; You have redeemed my life.

Lamentations 3:55-58

God listens; so should we. Christian leaders can build trust, unity and confidence in their team members by simply listening well. Good listeners open doors for ministry, deep ministry, in others.

Listening is an active process with four basic steps: Hearing, understanding, discerning, and responding.

- **Hearing**. Hearing just means listening enough to catch what the speaker is saying.
- **Understanding**. Take what you have heard and try to understand it in your own way.
- **Discerning**. After you are sure you understand what the speaker has said, think about whether it makes sense. Do you believe what you have heard to be true? What is implied? What may lay beneath the statement? What is the Holy Spirit revealing to you?
- **Responding**. Knowing if, when and how to offer back your ideas is a matter of maturity in servant-leaders.

Ten Tips for Being a Good Listener:

1. **Give the speaker your full attention**. Keep eye-contact, and resist looking away toward others people seeking your attention. Use open body language. You listen with your face as well as with your ears.
2. **Make sure your mind is focused**, too. It can be easy to let your mind wander if you think you know what the person is going to say next, but you might be wrong! If you feel your mind wandering, change the position of your body and try to concentrate on the speaker's words.

3. **Let the speaker finish before you begin to talk.** They appreciate being able to say everything they would like to say without being interrupted. When interruptions occur, help the person recall the last word or sentence you heard to encourage completion of their thought.
4. **Finish listening before you begin responding!** You can't really listen if you are busy thinking about what you want say next. If you think you will lose your thought, write down a single word or phrase to prompt you later.
5. **Listen for main ideas.** The main ideas are the most important points the speaker wants to get across. They may be mentioned at the start or end of a talk, and repeated a number of times. Pay special attention to statements that begin with phrases such as "My point is..." or "The thing to remember is..."
6. **Ask clarifying questions.** If you're not sure that you understood what the speaker had said, just ask. It is good to repeat in your own words what the speaker said so that you can be sure your understanding is correct.
7. **Relax and Think.** Time is on your side! Thoughts move about four times as fast as speech. Don't put yourself under unnecessary pressure to respond. You have the mental ability to think about, and evaluate, what you are hearing.
8. **Keep in touch with the Holy Spirit within.** As Solomon puts it: *"Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; He's the One who will keep you on track."* (Proverbs 3:5, The Message) The Spirit will prompt you at times, forming responses in your mind.
9. **Evaluate your response. before you offer a word.** There is an old expression, "You can't un-ring a bell!" So if you are being asked for a response, pause or postpone your reply so you can pray and consider their input.
10. **Speak the truth in love.** When appropriate, affirm them. Offer to pray with them about their ideas. Keep the door open for further conversation. (Ephesians 4:15)