



Becoming a Better Listener

Asking good questions is half the battle to having a good discussion. Listening is the other half. When you listen as a leader, it shows that you value the opinions and input of the group.

As you become a better listener, your questions become more pertinent and those in your group will more likely participate in the discussion. Here are some tips on how to accomplish this.

- **Be an “in-their-shoes” listener:** See the situation from their perspective. Try to understand the emotion expressed in their comments.
- **Be an active listener:** Your goal is to understand what the other person is communicating. If you are unclear about what they are trying to say, then rephrase in your own words what you believe was just said. This will give the other person a chance to correct you if you misunderstood the meaning. For example, “I’m not sure I caught that, Kristen. Let me see if I understand you. You think that Christians aren’t lonely because they have a relationship with God. Is that right?”
- **Be an encouraging listener:** Many people need affirmation of their comments before they’ll feel comfortable sharing anything more. Verbally respond to their questions and answers by saying something positive: “That answer shows you’re thinking.” “Great, that’s right...” (repeat what they said).
- **Be a “total body” listener:** Maintain eye contact with the person speaking and be aware of your posture. Certain positions (like crossing your arms or leaning back in your chair) communicate less concern than other positions, like leaning.

And finally, a good listener ensures confidentiality – what’s said in Bible study, stays in Bible study!

Leading a group discussion is both an art and a science. There are skills you can learn and master, but each meeting time and group is unique. Once you learn the skills and gain experience, you will find that you become wiser and more comfortable as a leader.

Leading a group toward transformation isn’t something you add on to your group; it’s the focus of your group. Pray for life-change. Work toward it. Expect it. Model it. Build it into your group. Don’t become so enthralled with orchestrating an excellent discussion that you lose sight of the goal of responding to God, which is what leads to life-change. As a leader your role is to stimulate group members to encounter and experience Christ for themselves.