

## LISTENING TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR

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Listening is one of the earliest skills we develop as human beings, but it may also be the hardest to master. With two chatty school-age children, I found teaching them active listening to be a challenge. My eight-year-old son is a natural public speaker, but his teachers frequently advise him to listen more. With lots of ideas racing through his head, he just wants to jump into a conversation even while the other person is still speaking.



So at home, I remind them both about making eye contact and waiting for their turn, while listening. Most importantly, I coach them that being a good listener shows others love and respect. As James 1:19 tells us, hearing words with patience and attentiveness is part of growing into interpersonal wisdom. In the gospels, Jesus was a good listener who not only extended space for others to speak but also observed the speakers with care and attention ([John 4](#) and [Luke 24:17-20](#)). Jesus served people by listening.

Active listening is an important building block of a child's cognitive development. From a practical perspective, children who are good listeners often grow up to become good communicators. And socially, it takes great empathy to be fully present while listening. Learning good listening skills will help your child's future relationships.

Learning to listen well starts at home. Model the "quick to listen, slow to speak" way with each other. Actively show interest in what your children say. Remind your child to make eye contact with you when they listen. Encourage your child to respect the "speaking space" of a sibling.

Here are a few listening activities:

- Make reading an interactive activity. Ask your children to take turns when reading a favorite or a new book and focus on listening respectfully when it's not their turn.
- Play listening games such as *Simon says* or Story Chain. You can integrate body language into the game so that listening can also include visual/gesture signals.
- Take your children on a contemplative listening walk in nature. Teach them to enjoy "stillness" while listening to the sounds of birds and trees.
- Encourage your child to be curious in knowing people through their words and gestures.

As you practice good listening skills with your children, remind them that God gives us lots of signs of his loving presence, listening and speaking to us with loving care. We can even hear God's loving presence in a friend's words. It requires a good listener to love God and love one's neighbor.

Learn about Listening Prayers. Check out [Ways to Pray: Listening Prayer](#)

Want to do a deep dive? Check out Family Fire's article [Training Children to Hear God's Voice](#)

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*written by Mary Ma*

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