

# Listening Discerningly to Non-Churched People



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Unsurprisingly, *listening* goes hand in hand with *asking*. Good questions – **not** questions that can be answered in one or two words – set the stage for good listening and invite further conversation. Ask so you can listen. Having listened, you are positioned to ask more probing questions.

## A “Active” listening

Active listening is careful listening. It attends to both verbal and non-verbal messages, and keeps in mind what is NOT being said. Active listeners offer “feedback” to a person who speaks. Such feedback may *paraphrase* or *summarize* what was just said, or perhaps pose a question to *clarify* it.

Suppose person X says something. Then Y provides feedback, reflecting what X just said.

- This gives Y an opportunity to verify his or her understanding of what X said. If Y’s understanding seems inaccurate, X can set things straight on the spot.
- Y can also actively listen to check emotions or assumptions behind X’s bare words.

Even on a mundane matter like the weather, active listening can become a gateway to conversation.

X: “It’s a beautiful day today!” Y (checking the underlying emotion): “So you’re glad about the weather?”

Not only does active listening invite further conversation; it also helps a listener gain understanding. With it, you can reach beneath the surface.

For more on witnessing, visit LCMS *Every One His Witness* at [everyonehiswitness.org](http://everyonehiswitness.org)

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For suggestion B and C, visit [www.cidlcms.org/witnessinghelps](http://www.cidlcms.org/witnessinghelps)



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