

WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT IT?

No one can become too good of a listener, just as no one can perfect the art of loving others. But what if, as theologian Paul Tillich* claimed, listening is the *first* act of love? When you know that someone is not only hearing what you have to say, but also trying to understand it, you instinctively know that you are appreciated, safe, maybe even loved. How would the world be different if more people were better listeners? How would your world be different if your listening was the priority? At this Brewed Theology we will be examining our listening skills and consider how they may be the best gifts we have to give to others.

* Paul Tillich (Aug. 20, 1886 – Oct. 22, 1965) was a Lutheran theologian widely regarded as one of the most influential theologians of the twentieth century. He taught at Union Theological Seminary, Harvard Divinity School, and the University of Chicago.

LISTENING 101

Can You Hear Me Now?

a Brewed Theology
conversation starter*

Listening as the First Act of Love

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Who is the best listener you know? The worst? What was a time you wanted to make a point, but weren't actually heard? When do you feel most loved? What is the difference between "hearing" and "listening"? How would you grade our country, culture, politics & politicians, and public figures on their listening skills? How would you rate the church or Christians on their (our) listening skills? How would you grade yourself? Who is a group of people that should be listened to, but really aren't? What stories or examples do you know of God/Jesus/Holy Spirit listening?

BIBLE BASICS

Read these Bible passages. Maybe out loud. "Listen" to how they sound.

- **The Psalms** – Browse your Bible or search for references to God hearing or listening. Like **Psalm 66**, for example.
- **Luke 8:16-18** – Jesus tells his followers to listen carefully. Why? Do we?
- **John 11:38-44** – Jesus raises Lazarus. God listens. Who else listens?

ESSENTIAL READINGS and LISTENINGS and WATCHINGS

(click the **headings** for links to knowledge)

Test your Listening Skills (~4 mins)

MindTools offers a 14-question listening quiz. Do it. (Be honest. Try not to “beat” the test.)

Ministry by everybody [is/requires/demands] listening.

Read this excerpt from Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s *Life Together* about the “ministry of listening.”

How Important is Listening?

Read this article by Christiana Holbrook McEntee on Forbes on the most important trait in sales.

What Makes a Good Listener?

Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman from the Harvard Business Review offer what people *think* great listeners do, and what they actually do. Skim this. Pay attention to their “main findings.”

Listening Tips. Five of them.

Skim this. Read the five Listening Tips by Julia baswden Davis in American Express’ *Open Forum*.

Video: “5 ways to listen better” (~7 mins)

A 2011 TED talk by Julian Treasure, about how to not “lose our listening” in a loud world.

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