

Compassion - Part 3

The Art Of Effective Listening

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In his book Stress Fractures, Charles Swindoll writes the following.

I vividly remember sometime back being caught up in the undertow of too many commitments in too few days. It wasn't long before I was snapping at my wife and our children, choking down my food at mealtime and feeling irritable at those unexpected interruptions throughout the day. Before long things around our home started reflecting the pattern of my hurry-up lifestyle. It was beginning to become unbearable. I distinctly recall after supper one evening the words of our younger daughter, Colleen. She wanted to tell me about something important that had happened to her at school that day. She hurriedly began, daddy, daddy I want to tell you something, I want to tell you something and I really want to tell it to you really fast. Suddenly, realizing her frustration, I answered honey you can tell me and you don't have to tell me really fast. Say it slowly. I'll never forget her answer. She said, then listen slowly daddy.

When I first read this, I said to myself, you know, that was me some thirty years ago and, much too often ever since then. Caught up in the undertow of too many commitments in too few days, snapping at my wife and my children, choking down my food at mealtimes, blaming it on the military because we had to eat fast, feeling irritable because of some unexpected interruption throughout the day. Having read this it brought back a time in my life that I'm not proud of, a time that has been repented of, occurrences that have been apologized for.

Having studied and given two recent sermons on the topic of compassion and having given four points towards active compassion in those sermons, I felt a need to give one additional point and probably, I believe, the most important point regarding active compassion in each of our lives. Today in part 3 of this sermon series on compassion we will look at one additional aspect of active compassion, that of listening. Thus we have our opening quote from Charles Swindoll.

The title of today's message is

Compassion - Part 3, The Art Of Effective Listening

Now I am not going to take the time to review parts 1 and 2, as they are available on our website and you can certainly request them, if you would like. As we move into the third part, this art of effective listening, I do want to list the four previous points regarding active compassions. Those points were brought out both in part 1 and part 2 of this sermon series.

Point number one is to avoid self-righteous attitudes. Point number two is to build on the compassion God gives through His holy spirit. Point number three is if able, and I should add here and I brought this out in the past, if qualified physically, mentally, emotionally and above all spiritually; in other words don't become a counselor if you don't have counseling experience, but if you are physically able to then help. Point number four is to be patient.

With this as a background we'll now launch into Compassion - Part 3, the Art of Effective Listening. This art is vital in striving to be a more compassionate person. Turn please to epistle of James. This may well be the earliest of the New Testament letters written approximately AD 48, maybe a little later. This letter was written by the half-brother of Jesus Christ himself. James became one of the leaders in the early New Testament church in Jerusalem. James addressed the letter to Christians everywhere. He wrote it to teach Christians to practice their Christianity, that of obedience. He emphasizes that if we have a genuine faith, we will show it by acting like genuine Christians. James gives practical advice on things like anger and quarrelling, showing favoritism, controlling the tongue, boasting, patience and prayer. We will begin reading in James 1:19 from the New Living Translation.

James 1:19. *My dear brothers and sisters: Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.*

20) Your anger can never make things right in God's sight. (NLT)

The problems the church was experiencing at that time are the same problems the church is experiencing today. What we're referring to here is the spiritual body of Christ, not any one organization and this has been brought up many, many times from this lectern. Some refused to listen to sound teaching. Some were quick with their own opinions and soon succumbed to anger towards those who did not agree with them.

Question: Is this not what we see in the spiritual body of Christ today and do we not see that across corporate lines?

There are many scriptures that point to the way that we should be living our lives. I would like for you to reference the following and in your own Bible study look at these scriptures, study them and apply them in your lives.

Acts 17:11. *These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (NKJV)*

This is probably a memory scripture for many of us. It's the example of the Bereans.

Proverbs 10:19. *In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise. (NKJV)*

Proverbs 13:3. *He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction. (NKJV)*

Proverbs 17:28. *Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive. (NKJV)*

These three reference scriptures in Proverbs speak volumes to the World War II slogan of “loose lips sink ships.” For those out there that are younger than I, when you read these, you will see what I mean.

Additional scriptures to study follow.

Proverbs 29:20. *Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him. (NKJV)*

Proverbs 14:17. *A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, and a man of wicked intentions is hated.*

29) *He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly. (NKJV)*

Proverbs 15:18. *A wrathful man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger allays contention. (NKJV)*

Ecclesiastes 7:9. *Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools. (NKJV)*

Continue in James 1:21-27 from the New Living Translation.

James 1:21. *So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the message God has planted in your hearts, for it is strong enough to save your souls.*

22) *And remember it is a message to obey, not just listen to. If you don't obey, you are only fooling yourselves.*

23) *For if you listen and don't obey, it is like looking at your face in a mirror, but doing nothing to improve your appearance.*

24) *You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like.*

25) *But if you keep looking steadily into God's perfect law, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.*

26) *If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are just fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. (NLT)*

If only the leadership of the greater churches of God, as well as the brethren would apply these six verses in their daily lives.

27) Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles and refuse to let the world corrupt us. (NLT)

There are four verses to note here:

- Verse 19 says “be quick to listen, slow to speak.”
- Verse 22 has “a message to obey, not just listen to.” The implication here is that we are to be active listeners, but also we must obey.
- Verse 23 says “for if you [just] listen and don’t obey.” Well, the implication here again is that we must be active listeners, but that we also must obey.
- Verse 26 says “if you claim to be religious but don’t control your tongue.” Again, the implication is that we are to be active listeners not letting our tongue get out of hand; listening instead of speaking. We will get into that deeper as we go through today’s message.

God created each of us with the ability to communicate and we communicate in various ways; verbal, written, for some sign language. There is non-verbal communication such as a stare, a frown, a smile, a gesture of some sort; sometimes referred to as body language. Of course, there’s the twenty-first century plague, that of texting. The one aspect of communication that’s overlooked by many is that of the art of listening, not only in everyday communication, but listening as we will see as a very, very vital aspect of compassion. Now we all have relationships and we should; God the Father and Christ first, then family followed by church brethren, then friends outside the church, acquaintances and others in our communities in which we live. Good relationships are what human beings need, not wealth, not travel, not high definition sixty inch televisions, not more toys than our neighbors, not even smart phones although some can’t live without them. What humans really need are relationships.

I am going to take a moment and quote a few excerpts from an article printed in the February 2017 magazine titled 425 Business. It’s a magazine that I receive from a good friend. The magazine is a local western Washington publication directed specifically to the business communities in the 425 area code, thus the title of the magazine itself, and that 425 area code is basically Seattle, as well as other parts of the Puget Sound area. The article is title “Meet and Greet” and the purpose of it is to move the high tech community away from texting and away from emailing to that of improving on face to face relationships, face to face communication skills both of which require effective listening skills. Throughout the article the author uses the word networking and networking in the article is simply the high tech term for communicating. The article begins:

The next time you are waiting in an airport or sitting in a coffee shop stop for a moment to look around and take inventory of how many people are paying more

attention to their electronic devices than to each other. It's well known that we increasingly spend more time touching tablets, staring into laptops or studying our smart phones than we do in interacting with others around us. Time Magazine recently reported that focusing strictly on e-networking and digital communication can hurt your career, not to mention your social skills where they really count in the real world. And a psychologist and MIT professor recently wrote in a New York Times editorial page "we have sacrificed conversation for mere connection." Brett Greene started New Tech Seattle in February, 2013. New Tech has approximately sixteen thousand members in the greater Seattle area. A companion e-newsletter reaches about five thousand additional people. New Tech is a company that meets one time per month and charges between ten and twenty-five dollars for a two hour event that offers appetizers, a no-host bar and socializing.

I have a side note here. Can you imagine spending up to twenty-five dollars for two hours to simply socialize, simply to communicate with others? I can't. The magazine article continues.

Our DNA is what it is and we've been creatures who need connection ever since the cave people times.

Oh, really? You mean cave dwellers were texting? Our cave ancestors weren't into Facebook, Instagram? They weren't tweeting? The article continues.

We all feel good when we are liked [on Facebook] or somebody engages in something we put online. This little bit of sunshine goes off in our brain, but there's also this thing that happens when you are physically near the person. When you were physically in front of somebody, you were reading their facial expressions, noticing their tone of voice, trying to find ways to connect with them to see where you have something in common.

That's just human nature and that's what builds human relationships. Those kinds of things are never going to change. This article continues.

The biggest advantage to face to face networking is the fact that it's face to face. If I see you again, I'm going to know who you really are.

Question: Have we as a society actually gotten to the point where we're paying for face to face communication experiences, where we're paying to actually listen to someone speak, where we're paying monies to experience a face to face relationship with another human being? A good relationship should bring with it good communication skills and one aspect of good communication skills is that of good compassion skills, because we are all emotional creatures. Sooner or later each of us will be faced with a need to show compassion. Whether it's a mother tending a child's scraped knee or a husband consoling his wife because the soufflé fell, whether it's a relative who was just diagnosed with a major illness or a friend who just lost a loved one each of us will at

some point in time be faced with the need to show compassion. Active compassion is a much needed attribute in good relationships.

What can help us succeed in our relationships, especially the compassion aspect of relationships? The answer to that is the ability to listen. To listen is to love and it shows that one cares, that one is truly concerned about the wellbeing of the one hurting. Remember the definition of compassion that we referenced in parts 1 and 2 of this sermon series; suffering with or for another, desiring to relieve another's distress. The ability to listen will positively impact one's desire to relieve another's distress due to the simple fact that listening helps one understand the distress that the other is facing. Yet, in most cases the instinct to talk is stronger than the instinct to listen. Our egotistic, self-centered selfish nature is to be heard by others rather than simply to listen to, to understand others. Turn please to Proverbs 18:2 from the New International Version

Proverbs 18:2. *A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions. (NIV)*

No wonder he or she can't understand, because they're not listening to what's being said. Continue in verse 4.

4) The words of a man's mouth are deep waters, but the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook. (NIV)

In other words a person's words are full of deep meanings as deep waters and at times hard to understand, hard to fathom. I didn't mean that to be a pun. A person's words from the heart are always flowing with wisdom like the flow of a bubbling brook. Have you ever stood or sat beside a flowing brook and just taken in the peace and the serenity? The continuous gentle flow of a bubbling brook is like sincere words that come from the heart of a person that is listening and not speaking, but when they do speak, they deliver a heartfelt message. Continue in verses 6-7.

6) A fool's lips bring him strife, and his mouth invites a beating. (NIV)

Better listen than speak.

7) A fool's mouth is his undoing, and his lips are a snare to his soul. (NIV)

Again, the admonishment here is that there are times when it is better to listen rather than to speak.

The following is taken from a Washington State University study on effective listening. Washington State University is located in Pullman, Washington.

A study of over eight thousand people employed in business, hospitals, universities, the military and government agencies found that virtually all of the respondents believed that they communicate as effectively or more effectively

than their coworkers. However, research shows that the average person listens with only about twenty-five percent efficiency. While most people agree that listening effectively is a very important skill, most people don't feel a strong need to improve their own skill level. To a large degree, effective communication is effective listening. Effective listening is a way of showing concern and that fosters cohesive bonds, commitment and trust. In addition, if you listen to the people you will learn what makes them tick. When you know what makes them tick, you can encourage them when they need to be encouraged. But what is effective listening? Effective listening is actively absorbing the information given to you by a speaker showing that you are listening and interested and providing feedback to the speaker so that he or she knows the message was received. Delivering verbal communication, like writing involves trying to choose the right words and nonverbal cues to convey a message that will be interpreted in the way that it was intended. Effective listeners show speakers they have been heard and that they understand. Many of us deflect unwittingly by sharing our personal experiences when we should be focusing on the other party. Think about this from the speaker's perspective. When you share a concern with someone and they respond by telling you about themselves, do you feel like that they are interested in listening to you?

What did we just read in Proverbs 18:2? *A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.*

The University study continues.

The responder gives you the impression that they aren't even listening and that they just want to talk about themselves. Sometimes we mention our own experiences as a way of saying that we can relate to the speaker's experiences. Our intention is to say you're not alone, but when we tell our stories, we risk sending a message that we aren't listening and don't care. Don't be a topper, the kind of person who can tell the story to top any story that's ever been told. We all know a topper, don't we? In a small way toppers are trying to communicate that they are superior. That's not supportive. This is not to say that sharing your experiences is never helpful. On the contrary mentors often help their protégés by relating their own experiences add to the way to reassure their protégés that their concerns are normal and that their problems are solved, but in counseling situations be careful to use personal experiences only at appropriate times. Speakers may not know that you have heard and understood what they have said if you deflect by moving onto another topic or shifting the focus on yourself and your own experiences. The best listeners keep deflecting to a minimum.

Listening is one of the easiest things we'll ever do and one of the hardest. In a sense listening is easy, or is hearing the easy one? Hearing doesn't demand the energy required in speaking. Turn please to Romans 10:17.

Romans 10:17. *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (NKJV)*

The point is that hearing is easy. Open the book, read the words. It's God speaking to us. Hearing is easy, but listening is comprehending what God is saying. Hearing is easy. It doesn't take much concentration, but what about listening? When it comes to listening do we really want to listen or do we really want to speak? If we're honest with ourselves, most of us, not all, would rather speak than to listen. True sustained active listening is a great act of faith and shows great compassion towards the one speaking. Earlier we read James 1:19. For emphasis sake I want to revisit it. I will be quoting once again from the New Living Translation.

James 1:19. *My dear brothers and sisters: Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. (NLT)*

On the surface this seems to be a simple enough principle, but as humans it's nearly impossible to live. Many of us, and I'll use myself from many years ago as an example, are slow to hear, quick to speak and quick to anger. As I've come to understand learning to listen well won't happen overnight. It requires discipline and it requires effort. With me it began many, many years ago. I wanted to visit one of the brethren who was hospitalized, but I was hesitant because I didn't know what to say. Well, I went to an elder and the words that he gave me that day I'll never forget. Simply put he said to just be a good ear for the gentleman who was hospitalized, will do all of the talking. Just listen. That was his counsel. It didn't go any deeper. Just listen. You know what? That's exactly what happened. Basically all I had to do was show up. The hospitalized person was so glad, so glad to have company that he went on and on about his health problem; maybe a little bit more than I wanted to hear. He enjoyed the fact that somebody just sat there and listened. Becoming an effective listener is not resolved due to a single conversation, but it takes time. It takes effort. It takes discipline.

Now for the remainder of this message we're going to look at six points in effective listening.

Point 1: Effective listening requires one to be attentive.

Turn please to Nehemiah 8:1-3 from the New International Version.

Nehemiah 8:1. *All the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel.*

2) So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand.

3) *He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. (NIV)*

An effective element in effective communication is for one to listen attentively. If not, how can one completely understand what is being read or understand what is being said? How can one know how to respond compassionately, if compassion was necessary? There are a number of Old Testament examples of individuals' requests towards God for Him to be an attentive listener or hearer, if you will. Turn to Nehemiah 1:1, 5-6 from the New International Version.

Nehemiah 1:1. *The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah: ...*

5) *Then I said: "O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands,*

6) *let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. ... (NIV)*

Here we find Nehemiah requesting of God to be attentive as He listens to Nehemiah's request. With that in mind turn please turn to Psalms 130:1-2.

Psalms 130:1. *Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord;*

2) *Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. (NKJV)*

Here we find another request by the altar asking the Lord to be attentive as he prays to the Lord. Turn to 2 Chronicles 6:40. Here we find Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple.

2 Chronicles 6:40. *Now, my God, I pray, let Your eyes be open and let Your ears be attentive to the prayer made in this place. (NKJV)*

Now continue in chapter 7:15

2 Chronicles 7:15. *Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place. (NKJV)*

Here we find the Lord's response to Solomon's request in verse 40 of the previous chapter. The Lord is stating that He will be attentive to Solomon's prayer. He can be attentive to Solomon's prayer because He was listening. He had attentive hearing, if you will, to the prayers.

From these Old Testament examples of requests to God to be attentive to prayers and the example that He is attentive should we not in turn be attentive in our listening skills, attentive enough to respond to whatever is being said? All too often we are half-eared, if that's a word, half deaf, because our attention is divided possibly by some external surroundings, possibly by our internal self.

Janet Dunn in an article titled “How to Become a Good Listener” states the following.

When severe emotional fatigue forced me home from a mission, I knew I needed help. Scared, yet desperate for answers I made my way to an office of a Christian counselor. At first my answers to his questions were guarded, but as I noticed his compassion and understanding I began to feel safe. Soon words were pouring out of me as he sat listening intently. Like broad strokes of a paint brush my words were reacting whole scenes, memories of past incidences, areas of confusion. His perceptive questions helped me describe my feelings, many of them deeply buried. Months later, with my health restored and my heart rejoicing over the new inner security I said to my counselor, listening was one of the best things you ever did for me. Then I asked, is listening a gift? “No, he said.” How did you learn to listen so well? He replied, “through practice,” assuring me that anyone who wants to can learn how to listen, can learn how to become effective listeners.”

If the God of this universe can have attentive ears, if the counselor in this example can learn to be attentive and to be an effective listener, then each of us with God’s help and our effort can become attentive in our listening skills.

Point 2: Effective listening asks perceptive questions.

Let’s revisit Proverbs 18:2 from the New Living Translation.

***Proverbs 18:2.** Fools have no interest in understanding; they only want to air their own opinions. (NLT)*

In doing so we find written in verse 13, again from the New Living Translation:

13) What a shame, what folly to give advice before listening to the facts. (NLT)

I for one in the past have done just that; tried to help solve a problem before hearing the complete problem. I think many, if not most of us have experienced that in the past as well, either on the problem side or on the supposed resolution side. Effective listening does not jump to a resolution without first asking perceptive, open-ended questions, questions that gently peel away the onion if you will, to probe beneath the surface. In doing so effective listening watches carefully for non-verbal communication, but doesn’t interrogate or pry into any details the speaker doesn’t want to share, but meekly draws them out and helps point the speaker to other perspectives through careful, but genuine questioning.

Point 3: Effective listening is effective ministry.

Going back to what I learned many years ago, effective listening can be a greater service than speaking. When I speak of ministry, I’m not speaking of the office of a

minister. One does not need to be ordained to minister or participate in ministering. So that there's no confusion on what I just stated, here are a couple of examples. Here in Moses Lake we have a ministry of sending cards to those with health issues, those recovering from accidents, etc., letting them know that they're in our prayers. This card ministry is the instrument, the agent, the means by which the cards are sent. It does not involve the office of the ministry, except for when the elders sign the cards. Another example is that a lady in our congregation has a ministry to the kids each Sabbath here with the crafts. Another example outside of the church is that of the medical field. A nurse does what? He or she ministers to the needs of a patient.

So, I hope I am making myself clear in the use of effective listening being an effective ministry. There will be days when the most important ministry we do is to offer our shoulder to some hurting person; uncross our arms, lean forward, make eye contact and hear their pain. Sometimes releasing emotions by offering a shoulder to cry on is all that's needed to solve a problem. The speaker may neither want nor expect us to say anything in response. Often a person can be helped merely by having someone who will listen to him or her and to listen intently, to listen effectively. Sometimes what our brother or sister may want most of all is just for someone else to know what's going on in their life.

Point 4: Effective listening prepares us to speak well.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, "We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the word of God." We know that God hears. We covered that moments ago, as we read scriptures of the supplications of some from the Old Testament. God does have ears to hear. Turn to John 9:31.

***John 9:31.** Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. (NKJV)*

The New International Version reads:

31) We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. (NIV)

God does in fact listen to us. He hears us. Yes, He hears us even when we're mourning. Look what we read in Exodus 2:23-25.

***Exodus 2:23.** Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.*

24) So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

25) And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them. (NKJV)

God does hear, even when we're mourning or groaning. Along those same lines please turn to Exodus 16:6-7.

Exodus 16:6. *Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, "At evening you shall know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt. 7) And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord; for He hears your complaints against the Lord. ... (NKJV)*

God does in fact listen and God listens effectively. Should we not be as attentive when we are listening to our brothers and sisters in Christ? I think so.

As an effective listener we are to take non-judgmental stances; train ourselves not to formulate opinions, not to formulate responses until we've heard the whole story. Then and only then will we be able to speak on the issue that's at hand. Then and only then will we be in a position of comforting, of showing compassion, if compassion is needed and then and only then, because we will have known all of the facts. Then and only then will we be able to speak from an unbiased position. Effective listening prepares us to speak well.

Point 5: Effective listening reflects on our relationship with God.

There are many, many scriptures dealing with our attitudes towards others, as we are to bear the burdens of others in Galatians 6:2.

Galatians 6:2. *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (NKJV)*

Help the needy in Acts 11:14, 30.

Acts 11:14. *'who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.'*
30) *This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. (NKJV)*

Fellowship with one another in Acts 2:42.

Acts 2:42. *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. (NKJV)*

Show brotherly kindness 1 Peter 4:7-11.

1 Peter 4:7. *But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.*
8) *And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."*
9) *Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.*

10) *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

11) *If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (NKJV)*

We are to mutually edify in 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

1 Thessalonians 5:11. *Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. (NKJV)*

Our desire not to listen or our inability to listen effectively to others may be symptomatic of our relationship not with one another, but our relationship with our spiritual Father and our relationship to our Savior.

Bonhoeffer warns, "He who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God. He will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God, too." Prattle simply means foolish or inconsequential talk. Bonhoeffer continues, "This is the beginning of the death of the spiritual life. Anyone who thinks that his time is too valuable to spend keeping quiet will eventually have no time for God and no time for his brother, but only for himself and only for his own follies."

Effective listening is a great attribute in the dynamics of our Christian fellowshiping. Effective listening may be one of the hardest things we can learn to do, but we will find it worth every ounce of effort especially in showing compassion towards those who need compassion.

Point 6: Effective listening of itself is an act of compassion.

Poor listening can be taken as a sign of rejection. Effective listening, however, has the ability to embrace. Poor listening skills diminish the other person while effective listening invites them to open up and to share their need. Turn please to Philippians 2:5. Effective listening goes hand in hand with the mind of Christ.

Philippians 2:5. *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, (NKJV)*

Effective listening flows from a humble heart that counts others more significant than ourselves, as we read in verse 3.

3) *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. (NKJV)*

Look what verse 4 tells us.

4) *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (NKJV)*

Effective listening does just that. Please turn to 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. We have here what is referred to as the love chapter. As we read through this, listen attentively to what we are hearing, as this entire three-part series on compassion is summarized in these thirteen verses. As we read through these verses, reflect on today's message, that of the art of effective listening.

1 Corinthians 13:1. *If I could speak any language in heaven or on earth, but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noises, like the loud gong or a clanging cymbal.*

2) *If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew the mysteries of the future, and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would it be and if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody.*

3) *If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.*

4) *Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud*

5) *or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged.*

6) *It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.*

7) *Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.*

8) *Love will last forever, but prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless.*

9) *Now we know only a little, and even the gift of prophecy reveals little.*

10) *But when the end comes, these special gifts will all disappear.*

11) *It's like this: when I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child does. But when I grew up, I put away childish things.*

12) *Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now.*

13) *There are three things that will endure—faith, hope, and love—the greatest of these is love. (NLT)*

Brethren, love is the greatest of these and that's what compassion is all about; suffering with or for another, desire to relieve another's distress.