



Friendship Evangelism

Three: Show Compassion

iFOLLOW

Working with Jesus

The iFollow Discipleship Series

About the iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition

Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

Credits

Curriculum Development: The iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition curriculum development was lead by the **Center for Creative Ministry**. **General Editor:** Monte Sahlin; **Assistant Editor:** Debbonnaire Kovacs; **Directional Advisory:** Brad Forbes, Carole Kilcher, Ceri Myers, Cesar Gonzalez, Clayton Kinney, Curtis Rittenour, Dave Osborne, Dave VanDenburgh, Gerry Chudleigh, Jane Thayer, Jerry Thomas, John Appel, Jose Rojas, Kim Johnson, Nicole Chao, Paul Richardson, Rich DuBose, Shasta Nelson, William Sutton; **Pastoral Advisory:** Claudio Consuegra, Collette Pekar, Dave Hutman, Don Driver, Fredrick Russell, Jerry Nelson, Jesse Wilson, Leslie Bumgardner, Loren Fenton, Rebecca Brillhart; **Unit Authors:** Alberto Valenzuela, Althea Pineda, Corienne Hay, Debbonnaire Kovacs, Ed Dickerson, Gianluca Bruno, Gil Bahnsen, Greg Nelson, Jack Calkins, James Whibberding, Karen Collum, Monte Sahlin, Norma Sahlin, Pam Splawinski, Patty Ntuhuka, Reinder Bruinsma, Ryan Bell; **Additional contribution** by Maria Ovando-Gibson; **Additional editing:** Dave Gemmell, Meredith Carter; **Graphic Design:** Mind Over Media; **Layout:** Paul D. Young; **Web Development:** Narrow Gate Media.

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Friendship Evangelism Three: Show Compassion

This presentation is designed for people who desire to serve Jesus Christ and help lead others to Him.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the power of compassion in expressing God's love
2. Learn how central compassion is to the plan of salvation
3. Practice some basic listening skills
4. Gain some insight into finding opportunities to share faith

Content Outline

1. The theology of compassion
2. Bible study from Matthew 24-25
3. The witness of "showing" without preaching
4. Listening skills
5. Life events and human needs

Background Material for the Presenter

Showing compassion to those around you is the second step in friendship evangelism. A simple but powerful demonstration of compassion is through the act of listening. The paradigm in *The Ministry of Healing* (page 143) helps us better understand the ministry of Christ. The second key verb in this paragraph states that He showed sympathy. When this passage was written in the 19th century, the word "sympathy" had a broader meaning than just "to feel sorry for a person." A contemporary word for this broader sympathy is compassion, the root of which in the original language is "together feeling." Throughout the gospels, Jesus is referred to as having compassion for the crowds of people who followed Him. "Sheep without a shepherd," he called them in Matthew 9:36. In John 11:33, when Jesus saw Mary weeping over her brother's



death, (an example of the kind of situation that this refers to), the NIV reads “he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.”

The Judgment Question

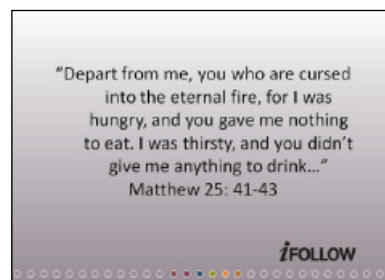
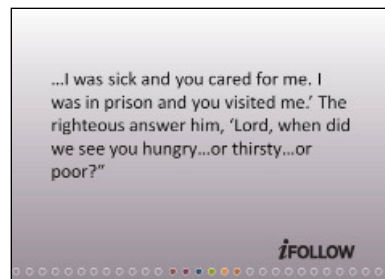
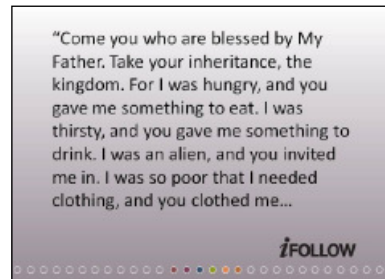
In Matthew 25, Jesus talks about showing compassion. It’s important because it is specifically addressed to “adventist” people, literally, people who are waiting for the return of Christ. The context of this passage begins in chapter 24, verse three, where the disciples ask Christ what the signs of his second coming will be. In that context, Christ begins to respond in verse four and continues through the end of chapter 25.

The bottom line on how to wait for Jesus to come back is placed in the context of God sitting in judgment. He says to those on the one hand (verse 34), “Come you who are blessed by my father. Take your inheritance, the kingdom. Because I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was an alien and you invited me in. I was so poor that I needed clothing and you clothed me. I was sick and you cared for me. I was in prison and you visited me.” The righteous answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry ... or thirsty ... or poor?”

And then he turns to those on the other side and says, “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire, for I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. ...” In verse 44, their answer is the same as the first group’s. “Lord, when did we see you hungry ... or thirsty ... or poor?”

The reaction is the same from both groups. One group didn’t see anything extraordinary about being compassionate and kind. It was just natural to them. They were not doing it to earn salvation. They helped others because it came from inside, from who they were, from the grace of Christ in their lives.

On the other hand, the group that didn’t act with compassion is saying that if they had known this was one of



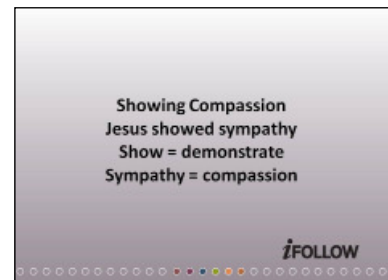
God's rules, then they would have kept it. They did not think that issues like hunger, poverty, disease, immigration or prisons were important to Christ. Their motive for service would not spring from compassion but self-interest.

God is able to see into the heart. Clearly, Jesus is saying that Adventist people who are genuinely waiting and hoping for His second coming are people of compassion, people who care for others around them.

Seeing Is Believing

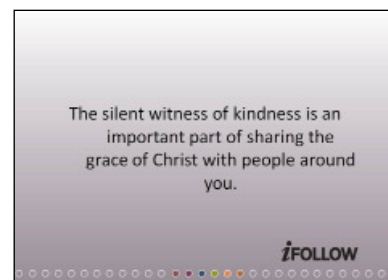
How do we show compassion? "Show" means to illustrate, to demonstrate, to act out. In other words, the first level of witness is what people see us do more than what they hear us say. What we do gives credence and power to what we say later.

One reason unchurched people have little or no interest in religion is exposure to Christians who say a lot but do very little, who speak of kindness but do not act with compassion. They see Christians whose behavior is as self-centered as anyone else's.



To "show sympathy" is to do compassion, to live compassionately. It is more about behavior than beliefs. It is really what we would call "living by values," beliefs illuminated through character. Have you heard older people who speak of somebody: "Now he's a Christian," or "She's a real Christian"? What do they mean? Real Christians are genuinely compassionate, fair, and kind to others.

If you are known among your circle of acquaintances as compassionate, you will be known as somebody they can trust. People trust those who care about them, who will be kind, who won't take advantage of them. Building trust through compassion is a layer of witness essential to help people open up and talk about important issues of faith. If you haven't demonstrated consistently that you are a very trustworthy person, others will not trust you to make a recommendation about something as fundamental as whether or not to trust God. The "silent witness of kindness" is an important part of sharing the grace of Christ with people around you.



God's Compassionate Heart

Stop and think about it theologically for a minute. Why is compassion so central to the

plan of salvation? Because God's compassion for sinners caused Him to begin the plan of salvation; it all came out of his compassionate heart. The Lord had compassion on sinners. He could have just wiped them out. But His compassion would not permit it.

God's compassion led to that enormous side trip of human history called the plan of salvation. It came all the way to the point where Jesus died on the cross to overcome the problem of sin and it's still going on now. Fundamental to the whole plan of salvation is God's compassion. A principle of effective witness and ministry is showing the compassion of Christ in our heart for others.

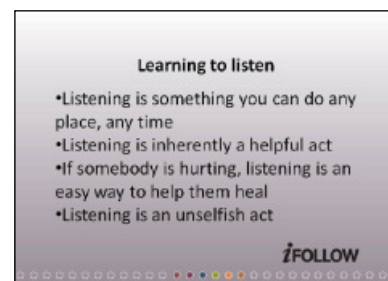
Learning to Listen

Where do you begin to demonstrate compassion in personal relationships? The key skill is listening.

1. Listening is something you can do any place, any time. No fancy equipment or budget needed.
2. Listening is inherently a helpful act in all settings.
3. If somebody is hurting, listening is a way to help them heal.
4. Listening is inherently an unselfish act. If you are a good listener, people around you know it.

Learning to be a good listener is a simple way to bring the grace of Jesus into any relationship without having to mention religious words or topics. It demonstrates the compassion of Christ. If we learn to listen to other people, we share with them the most basic truth of the gospel, that God loves them unconditionally. We need to demonstrate unconditional love if we expect others to be interested in God's love.

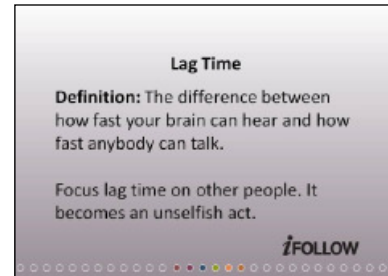
Learning to listen is a process of self-discipline. It would have been a lot easier if we had learned to listen at a young age, but our culture doesn't encourage that. If a child doesn't begin to talk by a certain age, everyone worries about it. Unfortunately, we don't have the same concern about whether or not children learn to listen, until it's too late. In school you take courses on making speeches or writing papers. But there isn't a course where we teach students to listen. We encourage young people to "express yourself," but we almost never challenge them to learn to listen.



Lag Time

Learning to listen in a compassionate, disciplined, and caring way is related to how we use “lag time.” Lag time is the difference between how fast your brain can hear and how fast a person can talk. No matter how fast a person can talk, your brain is faster.

What do you do with the extra time? Most of us use it to think about what we are going to say or why the other person’s comment isn’t completely correct. If we focus lag time on other people instead of our thinking, it becomes an unselfish act. By listening to others, we also begin to hear what is underneath their words; the deeper issues. We learn information that enables us to minister to others more effectively.

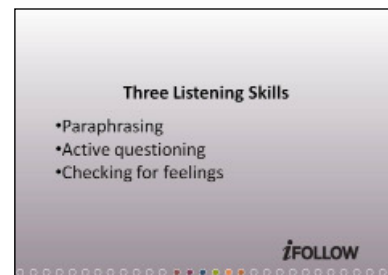


Three Listening Skills

You can improve your listening skills. There are exercises included in this session that you will do as a group so you can practice listening skills.

There are three skills that are important to conversations where you are trying to minister to people in a compassionate way. These skills will help you understand the needs of others and demonstrate an unselfish attitude.

Paraphrasing—the skill of listening to a person and feeding back to them in your words what you heard them say. This allows them to know you are really listening. It also permits them to correct you and try to tell it to you again so that you have a deeper understanding.



Active Questioning—learning to help the other person tell their story by asking questions that encourage and support them instead of changing the subject to what you want to talk about. You interview them and encourage them to tell their story.

Checking for Feelings—this is important when you sense people are hurting or frustrated. Verify your sense of their feelings and encourage them to level with you before you minister to them. When you jump to conclusions about what they feel, you end up doing more damage than good.

Listening skills are central to the whole process of friendship evangelism. Until we learn to carefully listen to another person, we really can’t introduce Christ to them. We’re really in no position to effectively share the gospel with them until we have heard them and understand their readiness at a deep level. Listening skills are essential to the whole process.

When to Listen

Your opportunities to share faith with another person and minister to them at a deep level come around key life events. When these events happen, it is traditional for a pastor or elder to visit. These events are moments for ministry; times when people are open. Even unchurched people are open to think about spiritual things at these points.

One event is when someone is seriously ill. They begin to confront life and death issues and become very open, sometimes seeking answers without your prompting. Other events include getting married, getting divorced, moving, changing employment, birth of a child, or the death of a friend, relative, or loved one. All of these are moments when there is openness and need. People think about their values, what life means, and they often ask questions.



Moving to a new community means changes in routine and service providers. Think about your routines. When you move, all require new ways of thinking. You have to learn a new geography. If people have any background with religion, moving to a new community may be a time when they look for or ask around about a church.

The birth of a child is another major change, often turning a household upside down. In America, nine out of ten young adults leave church. Typically, though, they come back to church when they begin to have children.

Times of transition involve change. Both loss of a job and a promotion are times when people start thinking about their lives and what's really important. There may also be openness to ministry when a child starts school.

Listening to people where you work will make you aware of these events in their lives. Hearing about these events tells you there is probably a certain level of openness to talk about spiritual things. But, if you don't take time to listen, you won't even know these things are going on in their lives. Listening tools helps you understand when you can respond to another's need.



When we hear a person hurting or see them at one of these key points in their life, we know that the door is beginning to open. We can then reach out and minister. But the door opener will not be obvious to us if we don't learn to listen.

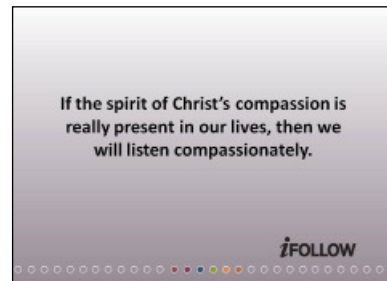
A lot of opportunities to extend compassion go by because the believer never learned to listen. We all know of times when opportunities sailed right past us. People needed our

kindness, and we didn't show it because we didn't know they were hurting.

Do we really care about people? Do we truly take the time to be a friend? If the spirit of Christ's compassion is really present in our lives, then we want to become more sensitive and capable of knowing what's going on in the lives of people around us so that we can minister to them.

Handouts in this Package

1. How to Show Compassion
2. Learning to Listen
3. An Adventist Paradigm for Sharing Your Faith



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Additional Resources

Burley-Allen, Madelyn (1995). *Listening: The Forgotten Skill*. Boston: Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Diamond, Linda E. (2007) *Rule #1: Stop Talking! A Guide to Listening*. New York: Happy About Publishing.

Glaser, S. R. and Glazer, P. A. (2006). *Be Quiet; Be Heard*. Eugene, OR: Communication Solutions Publishing.

Nouwen, Henri; Morrison, D. A. and McNeill, D. P. (2006). *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*. New York: Random House.

Peterson, James C. (2007). *Why Don't We Listen Better?* Orlando, FL: New Life Publications

Sahlin, Monte (1991). *Friendship Evangelism Seminar*. Siloam Springs, AR: Concerned Communications. (This seminar package includes both an instructor's guide with an in-depth listening lab and a participant's notebook. This is the most extensive set of training exercises in listening available from an Adventist author.)

Sahlin, Monte (2003). *One Minute Witness*. Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry.

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Discussion Questions

1. Share an experience when you tried to talk with someone but were totally ignored. How did it make you feel? Share an experience when someone deeply listened. How did it make you feel?
2. What is the difference between the words pity, sympathy, and compassion? Pay attention to how opinions differ in the group. If we differ so widely on one subject like this, what are some practical ways can we learn to communicate effectively and not assume we're all using the same mental "dictionary"?
3. In a typical service in your church (including Sabbath school and the worship service) who is doing most of the speaking and who is listening? What could be done differently?
4. If you had a life crisis, to whom would you turn first? Why? Are you a person to whom people in crisis or joy turn to?

Group Activity

Purpose: To practice active listening.

Preparation: Put the scenarios found below on slips of paper or 3x5 cards. You will need space for people to divide into teams of three and have a little privacy. Read through one sample to the group and be prepared to demonstrate the three listening skills.

Assignment: Divide group into teams of three. Let each group choose one of the scenarios and practice listening skills. Show mercy and compassion. Use the three skills mentioned in the presentation: paraphrasing, active questioning, and checking for feelings. Go through three rounds. In each round, a different person is the speaker, listener, and observer. After five minutes, rotate roles so that each person has a chance to act, listen, and observe.

Debrief: When all groups have done three rounds, invite a few volunteers to demonstrate the three listening skills from the exercise. Share feelings, reactions, and observations. Then ask each person to privately make a list of people they know who have experienced key life events in the past year, and take this list home to pray over.

Time: Allow five minutes for each person in each team, 15 minutes total, for each round. Allow 10 minutes for a few people to briefly demonstrate, and 10 more for sharing of reactions. Because good listening skills take practice, you may choose to lengthen this session to provide more practice time.

Scenario A: Your fellow worker, Samantha, bursts into the office, throws her coat in a corner, slumps at her desk, and buries her face in her hands. As you cautiously step over to her desk, you hear through her sobs, “Jim left me.”

Scenario B: Jeff, a dairy farmer near where you live, lost his barn and most of his dairy cattle in a fire last night. When you pull into their driveway, you see him wandering through the ash. Pain is written all over his face. His wife sits in the kitchen staring blankly out the window.

Scenario C: On the other side of the picnic table at a recent family reunion sits your cousin Brant. He’s sipping a beer and suddenly stops to tell you how messed up he is because of what his parents did to him when he was a kid. His bitterness is deep. After an expletive, he takes another swig of beer.

Handout 1

Friendship Evangelism How to Show Compassion

“I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40)

Showing compassion to those around you is the second step in friendship evangelism. A simple but powerful demonstration of compassion is through the act of listening.

Lag time is the gap between what a person says and how the listener’s brain processes that information. Since we can listen faster than the person talks, we fill the gap with thinking of an answer or coming up with reasons why the person is wrong. We stop listening and jump to conclusions. The focus is no longer on the speaker. It is all about us, and by doing so, we miss clues that the person is open to ministry.

Active questioning is learning to help the other person tell their story by asking questions that encourage and support them instead of changing the subject to what you want to talk about. Use open-ended questions such as “Tell me more about. ...” instead of questions that can be answered “yes” or “no” or one-word answers.

Paraphrasing is listening to a person and feeding back to them in your words what you heard them say. This allows them to know you are really listening and helps clarify what you heard. Not everyone uses words in the same way. Paraphrasing will “get you on the same page.”

Checking for feelings is important when you sense others are hurting or frustrated. Verify your sense of their feelings so that you will better minister to them. It may take several attempts before they say that you finally understand how they feel.

Write down as many key life events as you can think of that can be moments of ministry or times of openness. Example: in the hospital for surgery

Handout 2

Learning to Listen

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HANDOUT

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Handout 3

An Adventist Paradigm for Sharing Your Faith

There is an Adventist paradigm for friendship evangelism in our heritage. A paradigm is a model, framework, or example through which we see and act. Ellen White wrote a statement originally published in the book *The Ministry of Healing*. On page 143 she speaks of Christ's example as our model for ministry.

“Christ’s method alone gives true success in reaching people.” Notice the implication that some successful evangelism isn’t true success. Remember that category from the Church of Christ research of people who said that salesman brought them into the church but before a year was over they were back out?

As we continue with the quote, notice the verbs. “The Savior **mingled** with men as one who desired their good. He **showed** his sympathy for them, **ministered** to their needs, and **won** their confidence. The he **bade** them, ‘Follow me.’”

These five verbs progress deeper and deeper into a relationship; mingling, showing sympathy, ministering to needs, winning trust, and inviting people to follow Jesus.

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HANDOUT

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