

## FERVENT LISTENER.

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Listen, open your ears, harness your desire to speak, and be slow to anger my brothers and sisters.

**JAMES 1:19** (the voice)

Guard your words, mind what you say, and you will keep yourself out of trouble.

**PROVERBS 21:23** (the voice)

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These passages reveal the value of listening. In order to be quick to listen, we must be slow to speak. Active listening is a way to show others that we care. You will have the opportunity to listen to some incredible stories while serving in a new community. Many community members are eager for someone to simply listen to what they have to say.

# WHAT MAKES A FERVENT LISTENER?

## 1. LEARN THEIR NAME. LISTEN TO THEIR STORY. SHOW THAT INDIVIDUAL THAT YOU CARE, AND LOVE THEM.

You will have the opportunity to work with community members, whether that will be a specific family, an individual, an organization, or an entire neighborhood. With each interaction that you have on your trip, take the time to listen. Allow that person, and his or her personal story, to become the most important thing in that moment. Be consumed with and eager to hear the words coming out of that individual's mouth. Each person has something to offer and that is a story: a story about where that person comes from—past experiences and struggles, joyful accomplishments, family identity, what he/she loves to do, etc. One of the greatest ways to show that you care is through listening.

## 2. ASK BEFORE YOU POSE.

In order to avoid any miscommunications, it is important to always ask organizations, families, or individuals if you can take pictures while on your trip. Whether you are taking a picture of the people themselves, or the work that you accomplished, it is respectful to ask a community member first, and listen to their response. Taking a picture of someone's home before it is renovated can take away a person's dignity. We don't want someone's home to become an image of poverty and poor living conditions. Instead, recognize what that home means to a particular family or individual. It is home for that family, even if it may not look like the home that you or I live in. Take time to ask the resident about their home: the memories they have there, the length of time they have lived in the home, or their favorite part of the home.

### 3. BE A STORY-GATHERER.

#### ASK THOUGHTFUL QUESTIONS.

One of the greatest blessings of a mission trip can come in the form of being able to hear the personal story of a community member. For some individuals, opening up to vulnerably share a part of one's life, is a big step. Be eager to hear. Above that, ask questions to encourage that individual to continue sharing. These questions show interest in a person's life. When re-telling these stories to others, do so in a way that lifts up and encourages that individual.

### 4. BE A LEARNER!

Take every opportunity that you have to learn from each person that you come in contact with in the community. Being immersed in a new culture can be exhausting with so much new information to take in, but we encourage you to make that process an adventure! Ask community members about their history and what the culture is like from their perspective. Choose to be a learner on the trip. Consume each bit of information that you can, knowing that the effort put into learning is a way to show respect to a community. We also encourage you to be a learner during the time leading up to the trip: gain as much information as possible about the community with which you will be serving before arriving on site this summer. This will help you establish a more trusting relationship with the community from the get-go.

### 5. LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF THE CREATOR.

Above all, listen to God's voice as you prepare for your trip, and while on your trip. He will speak to you through others, scripture, music, nature, and personal testimony. Take the time to listen to the ways in which He is sharing His love, truth, and hope with you and the community. Without taking time to listen to the words of the Creator, we will have little to offer the families and communities that we are serving alongside.

## KEY TAKEAWAY

Listening opens the door to long-lasting relationships. A fervent listener is one that cares about the community, and seeks to invest time and energy into educating oneself of the community at hand. **As Fervent Listeners, we commit to showing care and love to this community through listening and learning.**

## FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

1. What does it take to be an active and engaged listener?
2. Who is the best listener you know? What makes them good at listening?
3. What are some examples of times when you spoke before listening? What was the outcome? What may have been different had you taken the time to listen before speaking or formulating a response?
4. How does it make you feel when someone specifically asks you to share something about yourself? Do you feel valued? Loved? Important?
5. What are some good conversation starters with people that you are unfamiliar with? What are some questions that you could ask the community members with whom you are working, either about themselves or about their community?