

Attentive Heart Devotional: Training Character From a Biblical Perspective

Read the italic section or paraphrase with your children to fit their age level. You can do all in one day, or split between a few days. Visual links entitled “visuals” in light blue can be printed ahead of time to show during the lesson, or click link if using your mobile device.

1. Introduction: *Jesus has the most BEAUTIFUL heart of anyone in the whole world!!! When we read stories of Jesus, we see how He is so kind and loving, and He spent His life helping people and teaching them how much God loves them! And did you know that God wants us to be like Jesus, so we can share His love with others, too? I want to be like Jesus and have character traits like Jesus has. The ways we act or behave are called character traits. Jesus has lots of good character traits. He is loving, kind, helpful, and responsible. Can you think of some other character traits He has? (Wait for answers or help them think of examples of others.) Do you want to learn to have these character traits, too? Let’s learn a new one this week!*

2. Define Attentive: *This month we are going to learn the character trait, “attentive.” Attentive means to pay attention and listen to God and others when they are speaking to us.*

What should we be doing when we are attentive? (focusing, paying attention, affirming what people say, ignoring distractions, making eye contact)

What should we NOT be doing when we are attentive? (ignoring, being distracted by other things, interrupting)

For younger kids: Being attentive means that we are listening to someone. Our eyes are looking, our ears are listening, our mouth is quiet, and our hands are still.

3. Give Examples: Now let's find out from God's Word who should have our attention. *Can you think of anyone?* (Allow them to answer at first.)

Let's read some Bible verses to find out together.

1. Read Proverbs 8:32: ***“Now then, my children, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways.”*** Show [visual](#) for younger kids.

The first one is God. *God wants us to be attentive to Him. When we spend time with God by reading our Bible, praying, and listening to what He speaks to us through His Word and His Spirit, we will feel closer to God and better follow His plan for our lives. He promises to bless us and keep us safe when we follow His ways!*

2. Read Proverbs 1:8: ***“Listen to your father's advice. Don't turn away from your mother's teachings.”*** Show [visual](#) for younger kids.

The second one is our parents and teachers. *God gave us our parents for a reason- to teach us how to live. When we listen to them, we can learn more about God and how to follow in His ways. We should also be attentive to our teachers and others in authority over us (in charge of us). We will gain wisdom and knowledge when we listen to them.*

3. Read James 1:19 ***“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”*** Show [visual](#) for younger kids.

The third one is others. *To whom else can you think of that we need to be attentive? (Allow them to answer first. Brothers and sisters, friends, and people we meet that may need help are all good examples). The Bible says to be quick to listen to others. Listening shows others love, but if we ignore people or interrupt them, they will not feel loved by us. When we listen to others, we can find out how they are doing and how we can encourage them, pray for them, and help them.*

4. Learn from Jesus:

Let's learn some ways that Jesus was attentive.

Jesus was attentive to God. *The Bible says He spent time alone with God, and He only spoke what He HEARD His Father, God, speaking to Him. (Read Mark 1:38 and John 12:49 for further study.) Show [visual](#) for younger kids.*

Jesus was attentive to His parents. *In the story where twelve-year-old Jesus was lost in the temple, we learn that when His parents find Him, Jesus listens to their concerns and goes back home and obeys them. (Read Luke 2:41-52 for further study.) Show [visual](#) for younger kids.*

Jesus was attentive to others. *Jesus knew how to help and heal people because He would listen to their needs. Jesus spent lots of time listening to his disciples and teaching them many things! (Read Mark 10:46-52 for further study.) Show [visual](#) for younger kids.*

Application Questions:

What are some ways you can listen to God?

What are some ways to show you are listening to your parents and teachers?

What are some ways you can listen to other people like friends and new people you meet?

Prayer: *Jesus, thank you for showing us through the Bible how you are attentive, and why it's important to be attentive and listen to others. Help us to listen to others better. Help us listen to God, our parents and teachers, and those in need around us. We love you Jesus and want to be more and more like you. Amen*

Going Deeper: Activities to Reinforce an Attentive Heart

Children learn best by repetition, so the following activities are suggestions for you to do with your children to reinforce an attentive heart throughout the coming weeks. Pick and choose what works for your family. You can also read my blog, [6 Ways to Teach Your Kids to Pay Attention](#), for more ideas.

Craft and Extra Visuals: Choose a craft/visual and talk about how to be attentive by using your eyes, ears, mouth, etc.

<http://www.ellisoneducation.com/3040/boy-and-girl-paper-bag-puppets>

<https://musiccityschoolcounselor.wordpress.com/2012/08/28/kindergarten-listening-skills-lesson/>

Choose a Verse to Memorize: Memorizing verses is a great way to cement concepts and hide God's Word in your child's heart. Choose a memory verse from the list below that would be appropriate for your children. Explain what it means and how it can help remind them to be attentive. Practice reciting it in fun ways!

Listen to your father's advice. Don't turn away from your mother's teachings." Proverbs 1:8 (NIV)

Video with tune for preschoolers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XduuX3A-lyY>

Now then, my children, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways. Proverbs 8:32 (NIV)

The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice. Proverbs 12:15 (NIV)

My sheep listen to my voice, I know them, and they follow Me. John 10:27 (NIV)

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. James 1:19 (NIV)

Answer Scenario Questions:

Pre-K/Kinder: Read the following scenarios with your children. Have them give a thumbs up if it shows an attentive heart and a thumbs down if it does not.

You are watching your favorite show on TV when your mom calls your name. You continue watching the show and don't go to her.

You are watching your favorite show on TV when your mom calls your name. You run to her and say, "yes Mommy? What do you want?"

You are at church and the teacher is giving a lesson. You decide to whisper to a friend and giggle with him.

You are at church and the teacher is giving a lesson. You sit "crisscross" with your eyes on the teacher, ears listening, mouth quiet, and hands still.

You are at school, and the teacher is reading a story. You look at the floor and quietly sing your favorite song.

You are at school, and the teacher is reading a story. You sit "crisscross," eyes looking at the teacher, mouth quiet, and hands in your lap.

1st-5th Grade: Read the scenarios and ask your children what they would do in each scenario to have an attentive heart.

You are watching your favorite show on TV when your mom calls your name and wants to tell you something. How can you be attentive to your mom?

You are at church and the teacher is giving a lesson. Your friend is trying to talk to you during the lesson. How can you show you are being attentive to the teacher?

You are at school, and the teacher is explaining your math lesson. How can you show you are being attentive?

Your friend is telling you about her weekend while you are at lunch. How can you show you are being attentive?

Practice Being Attentive:

1. **Listening to God:** Read a Bible lesson or a devotional together and talk about being attentive to the story and what God wants to teach them. Ask your children what they learned from the story. If they are mature enough, tell them to close their eyes and ask God what He wants them to learn from the lesson and see what comes to mind. God often puts thoughts in our mind that align with scripture, so this is a great way to practice listening to Him!

2. **Listening to Parents:** Teach your children to practice being attentive when you call their name. Tell them specifically what you want them to do, such as, “When I call your name, I want you to stop what you are doing, come quickly, and stand in front of me. Look in my eyes and say, “Yes Mommy.” Then I will know you are listening, and I can tell you what to do next.” For more on this strategy, check out the book, *The Toddlerhood Transition: Parenting Your Eighteen to Thirty-Six-Month-Old* by the Ezzos or the podcast [First Time Obedience](#) from parentingmadepractical.com.

3. **Listening to Others:** At dinner time, instruct your children to practice paying attention to each other. Make sure any television or background noise is off and cell phones are put away. Go around the table and have everyone talk about their day, one at a time. For example, you could tell everyone to think of three things to share about their day or a “high” and “low” of the day as example prompts. Encourage your children to listen to each family member and not to interrupt. Then have them think of at least one question to ask the person to learn more about their day. Praise them for being good listeners to each other!

Remind/ Reinforce:

1. Remind your children to practicing being attentive each day. Talk about situations that may arise and how to be attentive during those times.

2. Praise your children when you catch them being attentive. For example, “Wow, I love how you came quickly and gave me good eye contact just now!”

3. Reward if needed for training. For younger children, you could consider making a sticker chart if that helps. Give a sticker each time you “catch” your child being attentive when you call their name.