



## Pay Attention

As we drive our cars, we face numerous distractions: road signs, billboards, text messages, phone calls, music, the baby crying, traffic lights, and construction cones, to name a few. If we get caught up in turning the radio dial, checking a text message, or scrambling to find the pacifier for the crying baby, we are prone to lose control and end up in fender-bender, or worse, a serious accident. Yet most of us are able to focus on tasks at hand, ignore the distractions, and drive safely. We face distractions every day in other various contexts. Inevitably throughout the workday we encounter an interruption by a co-worker or client, a phone call, or an urgent email from the boss. Distractions can occur in less formal settings with friends and family: Kids are a constant interruption! How we deal with these distractions often dictates the response.

Civility requires us to be aware of others and sensitive to the immediate context of our actions. A flippant answer may evoke a similar flippant response. An entire relationship can hinge on a seemingly innocuous communication or conversation; even the tone of voice, facial expressions, or body language may convey an uncivil appearance and result in a similar uncivil response. We inadvertently convey the wrong message every day due to subtleties and nuances. Even if we are faced with incivility, rudeness, and sometimes absolute dislike, a civil response would be to ignore the tenor and simply address the substance of the conversation or response. Romans 12:21 says, "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*" Loving thy neighbor when thy neighbor does not love you is a tough example to follow. But Christian love, as the verse in Romans suggests, requires that in order to maintain civility, even in the face of incivility, we must always take the high road. Anything short of this approach not only fails the test of civility, but also fails our core Christian belief.

Ignore distractions and incivility, respond to animosity with kindness and good, and be sensitive to the feelings of others.

Credit: Oshkosh Civility Project

Visit the Door County Civility Project for more information <http://www.doorcountycivilityproject.org>



## Keys to Civility - Paying Attention

"Listen and hear my voice; pay attention and hear what I say." - Isaiah 28

### Because It Matters

In today's high-tech, multi-tasking society, it has become all too easy to lose sight of the importance of paying attention to what is going on around us. From the moment we wake up in the morning until we go to bed at night, our attention is divided. Instead of doing one thing really well, we are challenged to get three things done.

What is the result? In the harried, hurried reality of our daily existence, a lifetime of special moments can get lost. It becomes sadly true that we wait for the bad things in life to open our eyes to the good things we weren't paying attention to before.

Paying attention is all about focus: *seeing* what is happening around us. It is not just hearing, but *listening* to what is being said. Yes, it takes a little more time. But rewards can be found in a few quiet moments when appreciating an especially beautiful sunset, laughing as pets frolic in the back yard, or really listening to a friend as he or she shares something of special significance.

Indeed, we are commended to pay attention 26 times in the New and Old Testaments. There are 21 additional instances where we are warned of the dangers of not paying attention. The message is clear: If we all paid just a little more attention to the world around us, what a better world it could be.

### Applying it to my life

1. Think of a time when you were hearing a friend, but not really listening. How might you have handled the situation differently? Did your inattention hurt your friend's feelings? Was he or she able to tell you weren't really listening?
2. Is multi-tasking a part of your daily routine? Think of two or three examples of times in your daily routine when you are called upon to do multiple tasks at once. Does this diminish your ability to pay attention to each task?
3. When was the last time you really looked at the smallest details of the world around you - a sunset, the clouds rolling in before a storm, a beautiful flower by the side of the road?
4. How can you encourage others to slow down and pay more attention to the world around them?

Credit: *Because it Matters - Bringing Back Civility* - Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice

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