

TURN YOUR STORY OFF

When George was half way through telling about the time he and his little brother blew up the chicken coop with fifty firecrackers, you remember when you hammered a shotgun shell into a piece of pipe and were deaf for half an hour. Your mouth is itching to open.

That's called one-up-man-ship. It's as common as mud and as nutritious. The memory of that shotgun shell bubbled up in your mind without effort; you can't help it. Really? Half way through George's narrative you forget what he's saying; you stop listening; your focus shifts from him to yourself. That's called selfishness. You're getting in the way of yourself.

Being an attentive listener is a rare and Christian virtue. It needs cultivation. It's a tender plant. The weeds of self choke it all the time.

Why do you need to look and sound better than your friend? What makes you important anyhow? What makes you truly important is a secure sense of who you are and a comfortable presence before others. You belong to Christ who gave every last drop of blood for others.

So when someone parts from you let him leave with a sense that you accept and appreciate him. He feels better after talking to you. George might want to talk with you again.

Duc de Morny's definition of a polite man: "One who listens with interest to things he knows all about, when they are told by a person who knows nothing about them."

--D. Van Dyken, 3-9-15