

# Attentiveness

INTRODUCTION

**H**ave you ever been given a task to do and, a while later, you suddenly realized you hadn't even started? You were distracted and drawn away to something else! Distractions are like thieves who sneak in to steal your focus and rob your time. They may come disguised as a new thought, a friend's whisper, or a quick movement outside the window. Even your favorite toy can be a distraction! While cleaning your room you may come across a toy to put away, and that toy steals your attention from the task you were given. How can you guard against these distracting "thieves" and stay on track? Ask God to help you see the importance of your task and devote yourself to it with single-minded focus. Pay attention to what matters most, and you will enjoy *more* play time later!



*Learning at the Feet of Jesus*

## ATTENTIVENESS

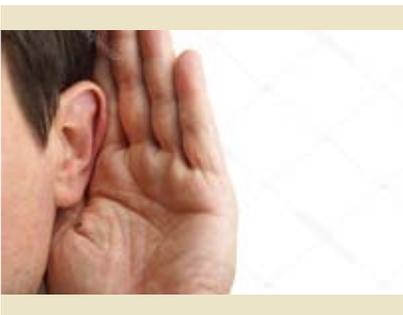
*Showing the worth of a person by giving undivided attention to his words and emotions*

# Attentiveness Overview

## What is Attentiveness?

*Read aloud, study, and discuss what attentiveness means and how it applies to life.*

The operational definition of attentiveness is “showing the worth of a person by giving undivided attention to his words and emotions.” Every person is valuable to God. He created us in His image and redeemed us with the blood of His own Son. God also shows our worth to Him by hearing us when we pray. Similarly, you can show others that they are valuable by being attentive when they speak. You give your undivided attention to others by carefully considering their words, listening with understanding, and showing concern for their feelings. Using your eyes, ears, and heart, be ready to show you care. Being attentive is giving honor to others rather than drawing attention to yourself. (See Proverbs 25:6–7.)



*The Hebrew root word for attentive means “to prick up the ears or hearken,” and describes how a son should attend to his father’s instruction. (See Proverbs 5:1).*

mumbled response indicates his disinterest, as he pays little attention to the speaker’s words or facial expressions. He is easily distracted and not concerned about remembering the details of what is being said. His self-focus turns people away from sharing their hearts with him. He doesn’t notice when someone looks lonely

The opposite of attentiveness is “unconcern.” A person’s concern for himself can crowd out his concern for others. When he is busy pursuing what he wants to do, he may find it difficult to pause and listen to others. His

or in need, so he is unable to look for ways to reach out and help. If you find yourself looking out for your



*Someone who is unconcerned about the person speaking or the task at hand will be easily distracted and switch his train of thought.*

concerns and not for the concerns of others, remember that God cares for everyone! You have the opportunity to communicate His concern for them when you take time to listen.

Being attentive can not only help you

avoid misunderstandings and prevent mistakes, but it can also demonstrate your love for your family. Create an atmosphere for listening and sharing by turning off noisy devices, temporarily setting aside personal projects, and asking questions that express interest in what others have to say. Your grandmother may gladly share life lessons from her past. Are you eager to learn? Your dad may try to teach you how to carefully clear the table. If he does, do you purposefully keep eye contact with him to show that you are listening to him? Your mom may explain how to complete a school assignment. Do you nod your head as you understand her instructions? God often speaks to us through our authorities and guides us through their training. You will gain great wisdom as you attentively listen and learn from those He has placed in your life. “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels” (Proverbs 1:5).

# Attentiveness in Scripture

*Read aloud and discuss each verse, question, and concept.*

Proverbs 2:1–6 says, “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” What a privilege to study the rich truths of God’s Word, hide them in your heart, and apply them to daily life! These truths are priceless treasures, far above the value and beauty of rubies and diamonds. As you dig deeper into God’s Word, see Who He is, and allow Him to work in you, your life will be a radiant expression of His love. He will be glorified as His character is seen in you.

## THE CHARACTER OF GOD

We see examples of attentiveness in God’s character in the following ways:

- God hears us and is attentive to our prayers. (See Psalm 66:19.)
- Our Heavenly Father values us so greatly that He notices even the smallest details of our lives. (See Luke 12:6–7.)
- Jesus gave a young man His full attention by asking questions, listening, making eye contact, and responding with love. (See Mark 10:17–21.)
- Amidst the pressing crowd, Jesus turned His complete focus to the woman who reached out to Him in faith. (See Luke 8:46–48.)
- When Jesus was twelve years old, He sought out the teachers in the temple, asking questions as He listened to them. (See Luke 2:46–47.)
- Jesus set aside time to hear from His heavenly Father in prayer. (See Luke 6:12.)

- The Holy Spirit is fully mindful of both God’s will and our needs as He intercedes on our behalf before the Father. (See Romans 8:26–27.)

## ATTENTIVENESS IN MY LIFE

Now let’s examine some ways God wants us to live out attentiveness daily.

- Why is listening with my heart better than simply listening with my ears? (See Proverbs 2:1–5.)
- How can “hearing” from great Christians through their biographies benefit my life? (See Proverbs 13:20.)
- What will happen if I choose to be unconcerned about those who have needs? (See Proverbs 21:13.)
- When God speaks to me through His Word, why is it important that I be attentive to Him? (See Matthew 4:4; Romans 10:17.)
- Can I recognize the voice of my Good Shepherd so I know the way He wants me to go? (See John 10:27.)
- What are the blessings that come from giving my full attention to my parents’ guidance? (See Ephesians 6:2–3.)
- Am I quicker to speak my mind or to hear what others have to say? (See James 1:19.)

## ATTENTIVENESS KEY VERSE

**“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”**

HEBREWS 2:1

# Bible Story

## LEARNING AT THE FEET OF JESUS

Jesus often passed through Bethany, a town not far from Jerusalem. In Bethany lived two sisters and a brother—Martha, Mary, and Lazarus—who were dear friends of His. Mary, who anointed Jesus’ feet with perfume and wiped them with her hair, enjoyed quietly worshiping the Lord while Martha tended toward actively serving. Efficient and practical, Martha welcomed people into their home and enjoyed ministering to their guests. One day, their brother Lazarus became sick and died. Four days later, as Jesus approached Bethany, Martha ran to meet Him. She expressed her disappointment that Jesus had not arrived before her

brother died, but also affirmed her faith in Him as the promised Messiah and the Son of God. When Martha received comfort and hope from the Lord, she returned to the house and told Mary, who came quickly to Jesus. Jesus wept with the sisters as they shared their deep grief over Lazarus’ death. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, Martha and Mary rejoiced at the power of Jesus’ words! On an earlier occasion when Jesus had visited their home, how did one sister show Him that she valued His words? What distracted the other sister from their Guest? What words of praise or rebuke did Jesus offer these two women?

### BIBLE STORY QUESTIONS

*Read Luke 10:38–42 together and discuss the following questions:*

- 1. Who invited Jesus into her home?** (See Luke 10:38.)  
Whom have you invited into your home recently?  
How do you make your guests feel welcomed when they visit?
- 2. How did Mary show attentiveness to Jesus while He was at their house?** (See Luke 10:39.)  
How do you read or listen to God’s Word? When and where?
- 3. The word “cumbered” in Greek means “distracted” or “drawn away.” What distracted Martha?** (See Luke 10:40.)  
What distractions does Satan bring during your Bible time? How can you guard against them?  
(See Proverbs 4:25–27.)
- 4. What did Martha say that brought attention to herself and away from Jesus’ teaching?** (See Luke 10:40.)  
What can you do to avoid distracting those who are focusing their attention on a person or task?
- 5. How did Mary respond when Martha interrupted Jesus?** (See Luke 10:40–41.)  
What should you do when someone speaks to you while you are giving your undivided attention to an important message?
- 6. When Jesus answered Martha, how many times did He say her name? (See Luke 10:41a.) Who else in the Bible did God call by name twice to get their attention?** (See Genesis 22:11; Exodus 3:1–4; I Samuel 3:10; Acts 9:3–4.)  
Why should you give your undivided attention to God as He speaks to you through His Word?  
(See Psalm 119:10–11.)
- 7. How did Jesus contrast Martha’s mindset with Mary’s? What did He say about the significance of Mary’s choice? What “one thing” was needful?** (See Luke 10:41b–42.)  
When you choose to ignore distractions and put time with God first, what benefits do you reap?  
(See Isaiah 26:3.)

# Memory Verse

## HEBREWS 2:1

*Play the game together to help the children commit Hebrews 2:1 to memory. In the section “Doers of the Word,” have the children record how they will apply the verse to their lives.*

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”

HEBREWS 2:1

### MEMORY VERSE GAME

#### Pass the Ball

*Say the verse together several times before playing this game. Then have everyone form a circle. As the children pass the ball around the circle, they recite the verse aloud together. With each word, the ball passes from one person to the next. At the end of the Scripture recitation, whoever has the ball has the opportunity to try to say the entire verse alone. Then start the ball around again with everyone reciting together until each child has had an opportunity to say the verse alone.*

### DOERS OF THE WORD

In the blank below, write how this verse could be applied in your life, e.g., “listen closely during family devotions,” or “review what I have been taught,” or “take notes on the pastor’s sermon.”

“Dear Lord, I yield to You and am willing to apply this verse. Help me to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

I ask that You would develop attentiveness in my life. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”

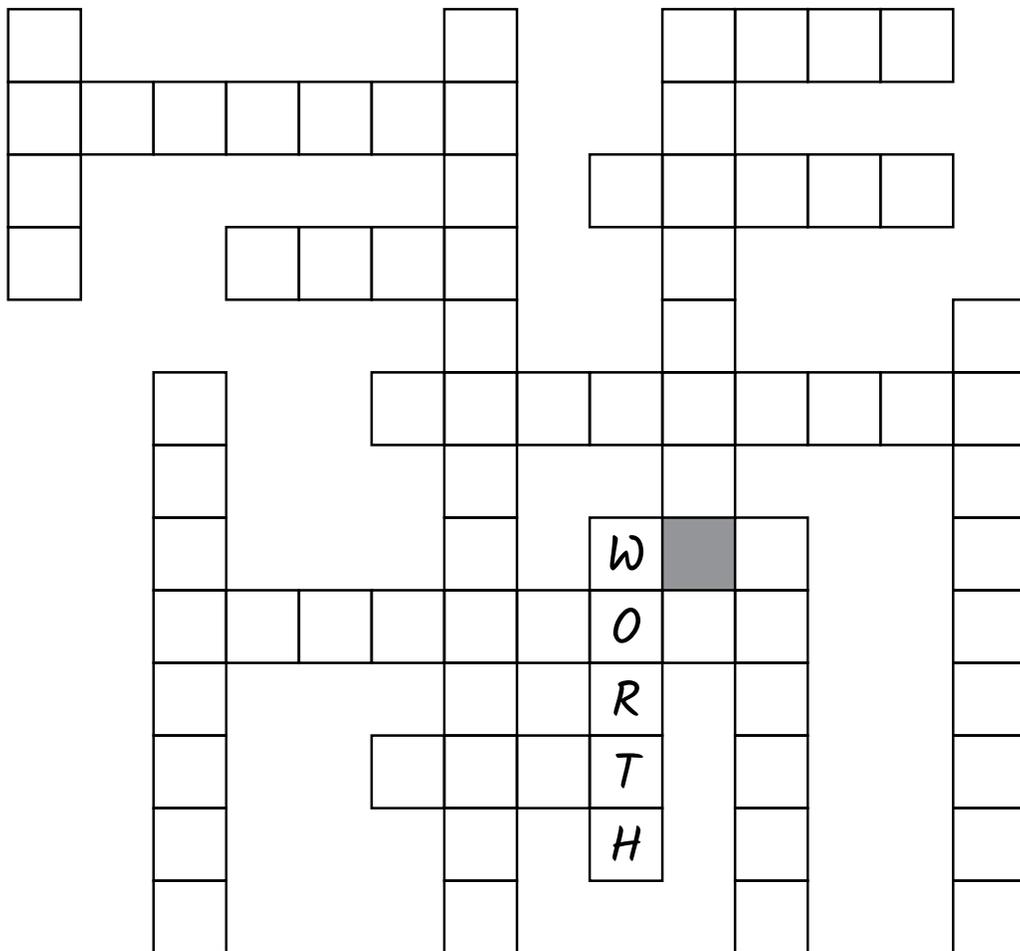
When the Lord gives you an opportunity to apply this verse, write it in your journal to later recall God’s working in your life.

# Activity

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

### INTRODUCTION

Enjoy meditating on and thinking about the words of the attentiveness key verse and definition as you fill in the crossword puzzle below. *Italicized* words fit horizontally and underlined words fit vertically. One word is already done for you.



### Hebrews 2:1

“Therefore we ought to *give* the more *earnest* heed to the things which we have heard, *lest* at any time we should let them *slip*.”

### Attentiveness

Showing the worth of a person by giving undivided *attention* to his *words* and emotions

# Craft

## ATTENTIVE OR DISTRACTED?

### INTRODUCTION

During this character study we are asking the Lord to develop attentiveness in our lives. What a privilege to respond to the work He is doing to change us into the image of His Son! Today we are going to discuss how our thoughts and attitudes affect our actions and then identify various actions as either attentive or distracted.

### Supplies:

- Two paper bags or letter envelopes
- Crayons or markers
- Scissors
- “Attentive or Distracted” template on page 32

### Instructions

Have a child label one bag as “Distracted” and then decorate it. Have another child label the other bag as “Attentive” and decorate it. Direct other children to cut out the squares from a copy of the “Distracted or Attentive” template on page 32. Once the squares of paper are cut out, turn the writing side down and scramble them on a table.



Who would like to select the first paper square and read the thought bubble on it? Allow a child to make a selection and read the statement in the thought bubble. Have you ever considered how your thoughts and attitudes affect your actions? If you think that the person

speaking to you is important and has valuable information to share with you, then you are more likely to pay attention. If you think that something else is more important or enjoyable, you will probably be distracted from the person speaking or the task before you. Changing your attitudes will help you change your actions. Is the thought or attitude that was read from the paper going to help you overcome distractions and be attentive or cause you to lose your focus?

Now act out what is written on the paper that you selected and the rest of us will tell you which bag to put it in. You will place your square of paper in the “Attentive” bag if your action showed attentiveness or in the “Distracted” bag if your action showed distraction.

Have the children take turns drawing a paper square, reading the thought or attitude and acting out the action, while the others identify in which bag to place the paper.

**NOTE:** Some people actually listen better if, at the same time, their hands are busy (such as a young child coloring a picture or an adult knitting). However, their activity ought not be a distraction to either the other listeners or the speaker. Training in keeping still, taking notes, and keeping eyes on the speaker clearly communicates gratefulness and a desire to hear the one speaking. If hands need to be busy, select quiet activities, sit where the activity does not distract others, and learn to give some indication of attentiveness, such as nodding your head to affirm you are listening.

## Learning at the Feet of Jesus



“And [Martha] had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word.  
But Martha was cumbered about much serving . . .” (Luke 10:39–40a).

# Hymn History

## “In the Garden”

Sing “In the Garden” and read about the hymn writer C. Austin Miles’ example of attentiveness.

One spring day Mr. C. Austin Miles received an assignment from his employer. After working for ten years as a pharmacist, Mr. Miles had left that profession for a new job: writing hymns and music for the Hall Mack Publishing Company. That morning Mr. Miles’ employer requested he write a song that would be “sympathetic in tone, breathing tenderness in every line; one that would bring hope to the hopeless, rest for the weary, and downy pillows to dying beds.” Mr. Miles accepted the challenging assignment. What followed was so remarkable that Mr. Miles recorded what happened as God met him in fulfilling this great task:

*One day in March, 1912, I was seated in the dark room, where I kept my photographic equipment . . . I drew my Bible toward me; it opened at my favorite chapter, John 20 . . .*

*As I read it that day, I seemed to be part of the scene. I became a silent witness to that dramatic moment in Mary’s life . . . I seemed to be standing at the entrance to a garden, looking down a gently winding path, shaded by olive branches. A woman in white, with head bowed, hands clasping her throat, as if to choke back sobs, walked slowly into the shadows. It was Mary. As she came to the tomb, she bent over to look in, and hurried away.*

*John . . . appeared, looking at the tomb; then came Peter, who entered the tomb . . . As they departed, Mary reappeared; leaning her head*

*upon her arm at the tomb, she wept. Turning herself, she saw Jesus standing, so did I. I knew it was He. She knelt before Him, with arms outstretched and looking into His face cried, ‘Rabboni!’*

*I awakened in full light, gripping the Bible . . . Under the inspiration of the vision I wrote as quickly as the words could be formed the poem exactly as it has since appeared. That same evening I wrote the music.*

Mr. Miles’ attentiveness to God’s voice during that moment in the Word yielded one of the world’s most



C. Austin Miles (1868–1946)

well-loved hymns. “In the Garden” is a favorite at retirement home services, as the words about sweet communion with Jesus cheer and inspire hope in the aged and weary.

When you read your Bible, do you hear God’s voice and meditate on what He is telling you in His written Word? Truly

treasuring Christ and His love for us requires that we give our undivided attention to what He tells us. Ask God to give you a hearing heart that you may know the reality that “He walks with me and He talks with me, and He tells me that I am His own.”

# In the Garden

C. Austin Miles (1868-1946)

C. Austin Miles (1868-1946)

1. I come to the gar - den a - lone, While the dew is  
 2. He speaks, and the sound of His voice Is so sweet the  
 3. I'd stay in the gar - den with Him Though the night a -

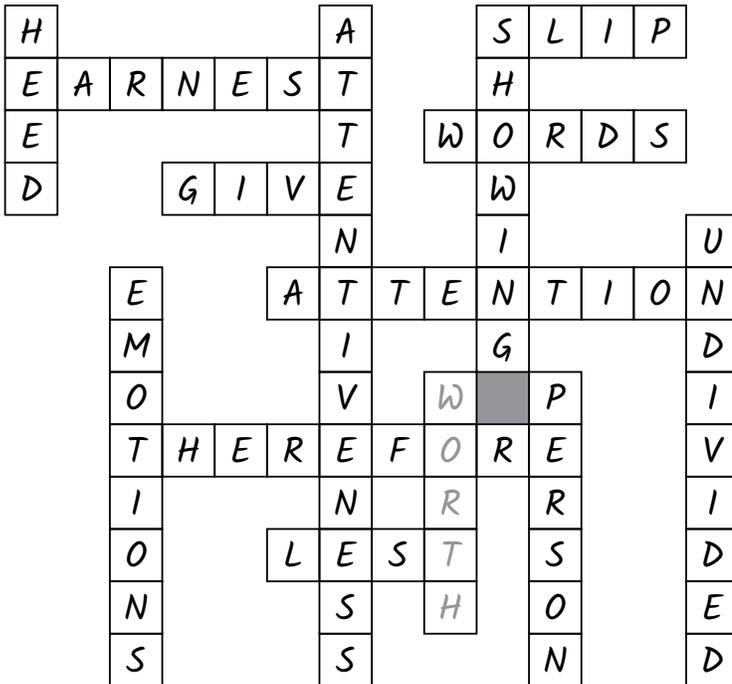
still on the ros - es; And the voice I hear, fall - ing on my ear, The  
 birds hush their sing - ing; And the mel - o - dy that He gave to me With -  
 round me be fall - ing; But He bids me go through the voice of woe, His

Son of God dis - clos - es. And He walks with me, and He  
 in my heart is ring - ing. voice to me is call - ing.

talks with me, And He tells me I am His own; And the joy we

share as we tar - ry there, None oth - er has ev - er known.

## Crossword Puzzle Answer Key



## Hymn History Bibliography

Morgan, Robert J., *Then Sings My Soul*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 2003, p. 271.

Osbeck, Kenneth W., *101 Hymn Stories*, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, 1982, p. 124.

Petersen, Randy, *Be Still My Soul*, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, IL, 2014, p. 149.

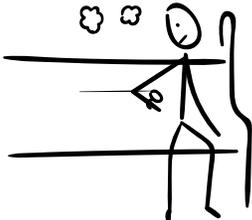
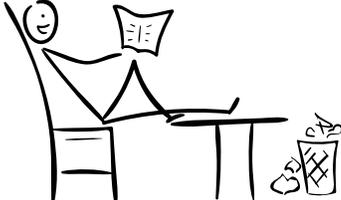
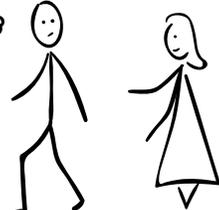
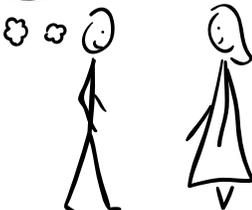
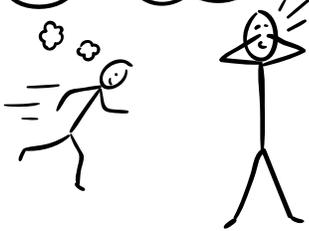
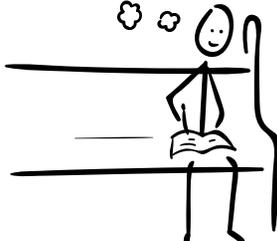
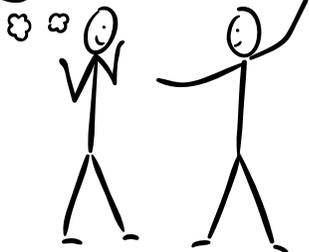
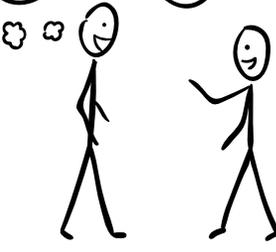
## Recommended Resources

- *2018 Biblical Character Illustrated Calendar*
- *Hymns for the Family CDs* (“In the Garden” is sung to piano accompaniment on Volume 4.)
- *The Power for True Success*
- Character Cards
- Character Cards Memory Game
- *Character Sketches*, Volumes 1–3
- *Achieving True Success*
- *Character Booklet: Attentiveness*
- *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World* by Joanna Weaver
- “It Is Good for Me to Draw Near to God” (Message by Tom Harmon, available at [embassymedia.com](http://embassymedia.com).)

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and many more, visit us at:

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## Attentive or Distracted Template

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <p><i>"I'm not interested in you or what you have to say,"</i></p>  <p>I slouch in my chair and frown.</p>                          | <p><i>"I'm bored and want to leave."</i></p>  <p>I look at my watch while someone is speaking.</p>  | <p><i>"The chores don't really need to be done now."</i></p>  <p>I read a good book instead of doing my chores.</p>                                    |
| <p><i>"Having fun is more important than having a clean room."</i></p>  <p>I am sidetracked by my toys and don't clean my room.</p> | <p><i>"I wish you would stop talking so I can do something I enjoy."</i></p>  <p>I am fidgety and walk away before Mom is done talking to me.</p> | <p><i>"I want the person speaking to me to know that I care about them."</i></p>  <p>I stop what I am doing and look at the person speaking to me.</p> |
| <p><i>"The person calling me has an important message for me!"</i></p>  <p>I go to the person as soon as I hear him call.</p>     | <p><i>"What I am being told is valuable, and I want to make sure I do not forget it."</i></p>  <p>I take notes.</p>                             | <p><i>"I want to hear what the speaker has to say."</i></p>  <p>I sit up front in the audience.</p>  |
| <p><i>"I am interested and would like to learn more."</i></p>  <p>I ask questions afterward.</p>                                  | <p><i>"I want you to know that I agree with what you are saying."</i></p>  <p>I nod my head and smile.</p>                                      | <p><i>"I want to help you concentrate on what you are saying to me."</i></p>  <p>I sit quietly and keep my hands and feet still.</p>                 |

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