

Hope and Healing: The Principle of Listening

Ready:

“Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.” — James 1:19

Set

Back in my college football days, I remember being upset with my coaches because I felt like my talents were not utilized as best they could (mind you this was coming from a 19-year-old’s mind). The coaches had a plan, but I was slow to listen, quick to speak, and very angry to the point that serious consequences were in the works to deal with my attitude. I wasn’t living out James 1:19.

I eventually learned many life lessons during that ordeal and went on to be a quality contributor to our team’s success. The adage that “God gave us two ears and one mouth and; therefore, we should listen twice as much as we talk” is simple yet profound. While this phrase is a cultural cliché, we can learn from it as we seek to bring hope and healing in our racial relationships. We must strive to hear from others before we desire for them to hear from us.

Proverbs 18:2 gives us insight on people who desire to talk more than listen: “Fools have no interest in understanding; they only want to air their own opinions.” Instead, we should approach relationships as Samuel did in 1 Samuel 13. He wanted to hear from God; so he made himself available to listen.

Spiritually speaking, the Lord has listened to our list of prayers many times before He was able to share His heart with us. He desires to hear from His children first. By His example, we should learn to listen first. In verse 1:19, James further explains how to respond in a godly manner:

- **Be quick to listen:** Listen to understand, not to respond.
- **Be slow to speak:** Don’t speak right away, so you can think and pray about what to say and how to respond in love.
- **Be slow to anger:** Allow the Holy Spirit to control our emotions, so that we have a greater chance to preserve the relationship.

The principle of listening is about hearing the heart and perspective of a person’s life and experiences without judging or presupposing your thoughts, ideas, culture norms, or world view. Listening requires a spirit of humility. And during a time when people are yelling at and refusing to hear the viewpoint and pain of others, we must choose to listen first.

Go

- Do you listen to respond or listen to learn?
- Describe a time when you learned from listening. What did you learn?
- Which do you struggle with the most: quick to listen, slow to speak, or slow to anger?

Workout

Hebrews 12:14; Ephesians 4:29; Galatians 5:17-22

Overtime

“Father, as I seek to grow and learn from others, give me a heart that desires to learn, ears to listen, and bridle my tongue to speak as You lead me to speak so that I don’t become angry without cause. Thank You, Father, for always listening to me. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

Bible Reference:

James 1:19

Hebrews 12:14

Ephesians 4:29

Galatians 5:17-22



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