

Series: WORDS
6b A Listening Tongue
James 1:19

Last week we talked about conflicts and how our tongue has the power to create and minimize them. We considered some of the obstacles to listening and they were:

1. Assumptions. When we assume that we know why someone did or said something we don't listen
2. Impatience. It keeps us from listening
3. Pride. It makes us defensive and un-teachable.

How does listening helps us create more solid and healthy relationships?

- 1 Listening is a form of love.
- 2 Listening shows you care.
- 3 It expresses that you respect the other person

We may think that listening is easy to do but it is not. Listening requires intentionality, self-discipline, and self-control. Today we will consider some of the things that help us listen better and, as a result, we'll have better relationships, less conflict and more peace in our lives.

Let's start by watching the following video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OINa46HeWg8>

We are so focused on recording important moments in life that we really miss those important moments of life.

If you would like to listen better, first you must learn to:

1. Listen with our eyes and body

Sometimes we say something with our tongue but our body communicates something completely different. So when someone is talking to you, listen with your eyes and your body.

In Mark 10:21 Jesus is talking to a rich man who wanted to know what to do to inherit eternal life, and it says: **Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him.** Christ saw something that moved Him. It was not what the man said, but what Christ observed.

Much of our communication is nonverbal. Gestures, facial expressions, the way we look, and body language tells us a lot. Thus we must learn to listen better with our eyes.

When your spouse, child, parent, or whoever is expressing something that is meaningful to them, and you respond with "Oh yes" while you have your eyes on the TV, computer or cell phone, you're not listening. Actually, through your posture, you are saying that there is something more important than them.

We can pretend that we are listening but people can feel when we're miles away. If we love people we will look at them because when we do we are saying: *"I appreciate you. I care. You are worthy to be listened to and I'll prove it by giving you my full attention"*. Look at the eyes of the person to whom you speak to, or who is speaking to you, and listen with your eyes and your body.

Parents, when was the last time you kneeled and looked at your child, face to face and let them speak to you? Or climbed a bench to watch them face to face and talk to them? (Some have teenagers that already exceed their height).

There are couples where the last time you looked each other in the eyes and spoke face to face was many years ago. Some might even feel uncomfortable doing this, but it is significant because you'll be saying, "You matter to me, I take you seriously, I want to understand you."

Husbands and wives, your spouse wants your attention. If they don't get your attention in a positive way, they will get your attention in a negative way. One way or another they will have your attention.

Parents, your children want your attention. That's more important than money or anything else. If they don't get it in a positive way, they will get your attention in negative ways, I guarantee it. One way or another they will have your attention.

Children, most parents desire your attention. You do not know how important this is for them! The problem is that the more you grow, you stop paying attention to your parents, and they silently accept that reality.

We all have to learn to listen better with our eyes and body. Secondly, we must learn to:

2 Listen with our heart to the heart

In Luke 8:18 Jesus says: **pay attention to how you hear**. Many times, to listen well, we need go well beyond what the words are expressing and hear the heart of the other person.

One example is found in John 4: 16-19 where Jesus talks to a Samaritan woman beside a well. He claims to have living water to give to everyone who asks, and she begins to question who Jesus is. Then she tries to argue with Him about in which mountain one should worship and who was right about the subject, the Jews or the Samaritans.

But Jesus listens beyond the words she said. The woman's problem had nothing to do with what she was talking about. Her quest was not to find the true place to worship, but how to find healing for the wounds in her heart. Christ asks questions and she confesses that she had five husbands and was not married to the man she currently lived with. This woman has had bad experiences in past relationships and needed healing. Jesus finds that by listening to the heart with His heart.

If we really want to listen we need to look beyond the words and listen to what the heart says, and quite often those two things are contradictory.

Illustration: Some days ago I was talking with a former co-worker who was fired by the company where I work because of an economic crisis. After he left, he found temporary jobs in different companies. Whenever I met him and talked, although he said that everything was fine, his heart told the opposite. I could feel resentment and bitterness. Now he has found a better job and says that everything is finally alright, but once again, his heart says the opposite. His heart spoke of open wounds and pain in relationships, as well as resentment against God. We talked further and I found this to be true, he even stopped going to church.

Often the heart speaks louder than the words and even saying the opposite of words. We must learn to listen with our heart and to the hearts of others to understand and, if necessary, help them.

Many years ago I discovered that the number one cause of adultery and divorce begins when one spouse has no one at home who listens to their hearts and with the heart. It doesn't begin necessarily with a sexual attraction, but begins when a friend or someone at work is willing to look at the person in the eyes and give their full attention. This finding should be more than enough for us to protect and strengthen our relationships by listening to the heart and with our heart.

Some say. *"I would like to listen more to my spouse, but the truth is that I'm tired of listening to so much anger that I prefer not to listen"*. When someone is angry with you, you shouldn't attack the person, but ask: *"What is the real reason for the anger? Is the person hurting?"* It is normal for hurting people to hurt people. Or is it because of fear? Ask questions, listen with your eyes and listen with your heart to discover the reason behind the behavior. Thirdly, we have to learn to:

3. Listen with our time

To listen, we have to make time. Experts say that the average couple in the United States spends only 26 minutes a week in serious conversation. Today, 80% of spouses work outside the home. Many come home only to eat and sleep. People are not talking or listening to one another, they don't have time for the spouse and even less for their children. Many do not listen to God because they do not have time for him.

We read in Ecclesiastes 3:7 that there is: **A time to be quiet and a time to speak**. We need to make time to listen. We need to go out with our spouses. Maybe we ought to do what we did before getting married, date each other again. Make time to walk and talk. Go to the park, go out to dinner and look at each other face to face and ask: How are you feeling, how are things at work, what is bothering you, how's your heart? You get the picture.

I am convinced that if we make time to listen to our children, our spouses and others who we say to be important in our lives, life will be easier, less stressful, with less conflict and more peace.

1 Make time to listen

2 Give your undivided attention

3 Listen with your heart and to the heart. Listen beyond the words and listen to the feelings.

4 Ask yourself, what the person is really feeling? Why are they saying what they are saying? Watch the body language and be aware not only of what you say but how you say it.

5 Listen to learn, not to fix.

6 Allow your feelings to be touched instead of forcing your feelings on others.

7 After listening to each other, pray together and make time to listen to what God has to say.