

## **Are you Listening to Me?**

**By Jacob Rodriguez**

Perhaps the most underrated power you have as a human being is the power of listening. Whether in your marriage, friendships, or even at work, listening is of life's most precious abilities. You've heard it before; God gave you two ears and one mouth for a reason. How true that is! If we all spent a little less time talking, and little more time listening, imagine how different things would be? For one, we would get ourselves into less trouble, simply because our mouth can create huge problems.

James 3:1-5 nails it concerning the tongue, "1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. 3 Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!"

In contrast, look at what these scriptures say about the power of listening:

James 1:19 says, "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;"

Proverbs 1:5 says, "Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance."

Listening a powerful way of learning, understanding and grasping. It's especially important in relationships, mainly marriages. Although men and women hear and calculate things differently, the concept of being "swift to hear, slow to speak" will add invaluable depth to your relationship. Let's look at this in the context of resolving relational conflict.

### **1. Swift to Hear.**

We all struggle with listening because we all want to be "heard". Our opinions, thoughts, and points of view mean a great deal to us. After all, we thought of them. But listening is empowering, especially when resolving conflict. When we listen, we're not only grasping the message, but showing that we care about what the other person is saying. Even if you don't agree, listening before speaking will tame your urge to say or do things that cause more frustration.

### **2. Slow to Speak.**

You always have something to say. Even if you're not talkative, you have something to say. In fact, talking is good too. I wouldn't suggest that you stop talking either. Silence can be just as destructive as speaking when it's done in an unhealthy manner. Do you remember what your mom used to say? "Think before you speak." It's simple but true. We get ourselves into trouble when we blurb out things without thinking, especially when trying to resolve a problem with your spouse or friend. How we talk can quickly turn a conversation into an argument.

You will have to determine the best way to be a better listener. Even if you have to start by biting your tongue! Trust me, the little pain you have from your teeth crushing your soft tongue won't come near to the pain you might cause by saying something you shouldn't. But really, it all comes down to choice. You simply have to make a decision. There's no magic formula or spiritual prayer that can change it. However, you can ask God to help you.

I hope this helps you in at least some small way. If it makes the difference in your communication becoming less confrontational, and more conversational, then that's all I could ask for.