

BLESS: Listen

Opener: Who has listened to you in a way that made a difference in your life?

Scripture: My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.²¹ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. James 1:19-25

Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions. Proverbs 18:2

Discussion Questions

1. Last week we talked about prayer. This week the focus is on listening. James says we should be “quick to listen.” Just because we hear someone talking doesn’t mean we really plug into what they’re saying. How would you explain what it means to “listen” as opposed to what it means to “hear”? James 1:19
2. We often fake-listen, just waiting for our turn to talk. How does being “slow to speak” contribute to our success in really listening to someone? What makes it so hard to listen without actively formulating a response or zoning out? James 1:19; Proverbs 18:2
3. Then James adds that we should be “slow to become angry because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.” How would becoming angry inhibit our ability to listen and end up producing unrighteousness? Can you give an example of when you saw this happen? James 1:19-20
4. James follows all this by telling us to get rid of all moral filth and evil. How do we do that and how does it help us be better listeners? James 1:21
5. According to James, listening isn’t all we need to do. What’s an example of someone who listens to God’s word without doing what it says? How does the mirror analogy relate to hearing and doing God’s will? James 1:22-24
6. How has listening made a difference in your relationship with others in your family, the church, and your neighborhood?
7. How do prayer and listening intersect as we try to bless others? How do we keep praying and listening when it seems like the answers will never come and relationships will never change?

Wrap Up: The best listeners share a common goal: to be *impressed* and *interested*, rather than *impressive* and *interesting*. This takes humility, which Christians should have in spades. But the truth is, we’re often known more for talking than for listening. And in fact, it’s easy to treat listening as an afterthought instead of recognizing it as vital to relationships. Make a plan this week to truly listen to the people in your life. After all, if Jesus, the Son of God, stopped to listen to the people around Him, so should we.