

# DAY 18 LISTEN



## James 1:19

*"Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak..." - James 1.19*

I remember when I was in high school. I had joined a "peer counseling" group. It was a class that trained students to be counselors to help augment the work of professional counselors at our school and help mitigate the difficult effects of situations that were arising within the school. It was a great class, and honestly, I signed up for it because it largely meant I had the opportunity to take my friends out of

class and hang out for a few minutes.

But what was so interesting to me was that in the first half of the class, every day, we spent time doing various exercises in active listening. Body language, posture, reframing what was said, actually listening. It was amazing to me how much work it took to properly listen.

We live in a world that isn't designed for listening. We live in a noisy world that gives credence to prestige to the loudest voices. Think of the way social media is constructed. It provides us with the false presumption that everyone is waiting with bated breath to hear what I have to say! It gives a false illusion into thinking we should have something to say about everything!

We live in a noisy world. Is it any wonder that those social outlets can so easily lend themselves to vitriol and negativity? In many ways, we do the complete opposite of what James encourages us to do.

Rather than being "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry." We are "Quick to speak, and slow to listen, quick to become angry."

And unfortunately, from my own experience, both as perpetrator and recipient, Christians do not always stand in contrast to this culture. Often we are guilty offenders as well. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once quipped about Christians, "Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians because these Christians are talking when they should be listening."

This posture of speaking quickly is damaging to our connection with God. Listening lies at the very heart of life with God. And in order to attend to and listen to God, we have to learn to listen to the person right next to us. After all, how can we listen to God, who we cannot see when we can't even listen to our neighbor, who we can see?

It is in practicing to listen to the other that we learn to listen to God. Lent can be a time when we embark on a spiritual adventure in learning to listen. And we can begin with those closest to us. Friends, family, colleagues, neighbors, kids, etc. All of them become a space for practicing to listen. Eventually, listening will become a spiritual practice and habit that will give way to a way of life.

### Daily Practice

Ask God today for the gift of ears. Throughout the day, remember James's invitation to be quick to listen and slow to speak. Make a conscious effort in every conversation to listen more than you usually do.

The below reflections are written by congregants & staff of CPC. All reflections are following Trevor Hudson's book *Pauses for Lent* and are both heavily influenced and borrowed from his work. Any quotes without attribution should be credited to him.