



PART 1: QUICK TO LISTEN

INTRODUCTION

We all know what it's like to be hurt by someone who just couldn't listen long enough to understand us. Maybe in their attempt to be right, they damaged a relationship that could have been saved with a little patience and curiosity. You've probably been on the other side of that coin too. Taking the verbal offense may have won the argument, but you lost relationally. What if we didn't settle for being right, but tried to make things right instead? The longer we listen, the more we learn, and the better chance we have of protecting ourselves from our own big mouths.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We've all heard it said, "Never talk about politics, sex, money, and religion at the dinner table." What area do you think brings up the most conflict in your family or with your friends?
2. In the middle of conflict, we all have a natural response. Circle the phrases below that best describe what you're quick to do:
 - *When someone accuses me, I'm quick to:*
 - Review the facts and prepare a retort.
 - Write the person off and ignore their claims.
 - Ask clarifying questions.
 - *When someone tells me how I've hurt them, I'm quick to:*
 - Claim my own hurt.
 - Defend my actions.
 - Affirm their feelings and apologize.
 - *When I know I'm right, I'm quick to:*
 - State my case with evidence.
 - Shut down and withdraw emotionally.
 - Be curious and patient while they explain their point of view.
3. Read James 1:19-21. Imagine you were trying to summarize these verses for a friend. What would you say in one or two sentences to explain what James was communicating?
4. God doesn't want us to be right *at* one another, but right *with* one another. Who do you need to be right with currently? Describe the tensions in that relationship.

5. Which of these strategies might help you best in the relationship in which you're currently experiencing the most conflict? Why?
- Ask three questions before responding with your side.
 - Avoid declarations.
 - Listen to understand rather than reply.
 - Remind yourself that everything this person does, says, and believes makes sense to them.
6. Jesus didn't come to be right. He had every right answer, but he came to reconcile men and women to God and to reconcile us to one another. Think of a few words that describe Jesus' approach and discuss how these characteristics can help guide your most difficult conversations.

MOVING FORWARD

When we listen to reply, we lose our chance to understand. We undermine the value of our relationships. This week, take some time to practice the hand motion that goes with James 1:19: Place your fists in your lap and when you say "Quick to listen," open your hands and finish the verse by slowly saying "Slow to speak."

WEEKLY READING

Handwrite James 1:19-20 and place it somewhere you'll see it this week. Try your bathroom mirror or your desk or the dashboard of your car. Pray for God to give you the discipline to slow down and listen first when you face conflict.