

Two Ears – One Mouth
By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison
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Effective Sermon Series

People who have learned the ability to listen to others will always have friends. The judgments and observations of those who listen will stand a better chance of accuracy than those who speak twice and listen once. As the Psalmist said, *“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!”* King Solomon showed the ability to listen deeply and settle an interesting case with two women arguing over who was the mother of a baby. Jesus stressed repeatedly in the Gospels and in Revelation 2-3, *“He who has ears to hear...let him hear.”* In the book of Acts, the early church had to decide what to do about letting the Gentiles into the faith. James stood and said, *“Brothers, listen to me...”* Paul told the Romans there is a link between hearing and faith: *“So faith comes through hearing...”* To be an effective person, we simply must learn to listen. It is an acquired habit.

APPLICATION: How would your parent, child, spouse, friend, boss, employee, teacher, student, and fellow Christian rate you as a listener? Are you usually just waiting for your turn to talk or are you truly taking an interest in what others are saying? This week resolve not to interrupt or finish another person’s sentences and see what a difference that makes. As you seek to understand, remember the third way.

Our text, James 1:19-20, is only 2 verses, but let’s read what follows. James 1:21-27 *Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

Memorize this verse: ***be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger***

I mentioned the little book, **“Unoffendable.”** His premise = *“Don’t get Angry – Take Action.”* That’s what **James** said. Furthermore, **Jesus** modeled James 1:19-20. He was secure in his identity.

James 1:19-20 is a good practice for **PARENTS**. Let’s review the 7 Habits and apply for Parents:

BE PROACTIVE - Sometimes when our kids try to tell us something, we jump in with our opinions, and miss what they are trying to say. Parents must be PROACTIVE listeners (not inactive or reactive – that’s anger). Understanding requires asking questions and having a conversation without an agenda; it seeks a win/win.

BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND – this won’t last forever

PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST – don’t die on every hill

SEEK WIN-WIN – or no deal.

SEEK 1ST TO UNDERSTAND THEN TO BE UNDERSTOOD.

TEENAGERS, you are not exempt. You must be proactive, too. You can do things to help your family W/W.

Why do we exist as a church? What’s our mission statement? To Help Others Follow Jesus

How do we do this? 1.) Love God 2.) Love people

Maybe the best ways to love people = SEEK 1ST TO UNDERSTAND THEN TO BE UNDERSTOOD

Last week we used the Quadrant about “Win-Win.” W/L (or L/W) and L/L is not how we want this to go. Covey says in relationships of trust it should be W/W or no deal.

Let’s apply the 4 Quadrants to talking/listening. Talk/Talk Listen/Talk Talk/Listen Listen/Listen

James desires Quadrant II – “Listen/Talk.” Have you been around a T/T person? At least they keep the conversation going – but it’s always about THEM. Very self-absorbed people.

Extroverts. T/L people have the right balance, possibly, but they can get in trouble because they may “Tell more than they know.” L/L can be those who are passive (or passive/aggressive). You don’t know what they are thinking.

Ecclesiastes 3:7 *There’s a time to keep silence, and a time to speak*

Even when we disagree with someone if we seek to understand we can still build trust.

The President of Chick-fil-A, Dan Cathy, is a strong Christian. A few years ago a reporter asked his opinion on gay marriage. Cathy stated the biblical position that he believes marriage is designed for a man/woman. An organized and highly publicized protest/boycott against him and Chick-fil-A followed. That launched a counter protest and there was a “CFA Appreciation Day.” It was a protest the protest. Who would have thought that eating a chicken sandwich could ever become political? It was a record-setting day for the restaurant. However, Dan Cathy didn’t personally affirm or join in the protest the protest. Instead, he quietly reached out to one of his strongest critics, gay activist Shane Windmeyer, who wrote this in essay to the Huffington Post. *“It is not often that people with deeply held and completely opposing viewpoints actually risk sitting down and listening to one another. We see this failure to listen*

and learn in our government, in our communities and in our own families. Dan Cathy and I would, together, try to do better than each of us had experienced before. Never once did Dan or anyone from Chick-fil-A ask for Campus Pride to stop protesting Chick-fil-A. On the contrary, Dan listened intently to our concerns and he sought first to understand, not to be understood. Dan and I shared respectful, enduring communication and built trust. His demeanor has always been one of kindness and openness. Dan expressed regret and genuine sadness when he heard of people being treated unkindly in the name of Chick-fil-A – but he offered not apologies for his genuine beliefs about marriage. Deep disagreements and no apologies for what he believes. Listening, respect, friendship, love at the same time. Tim Keller wrote, “Tolerance isn’t about not having beliefs. It’s about how your beliefs lead you to treat people who disagree with you.”

Scott, who was a pastor living in NYC at the time, walked past a bagel shop on Broadway when a homeless woman he recognized asked if he would buy her something to eat. Scott offered to buy her a bagel and coffee. She said the coffee would be nice but preferred a container of egg salad not a bagel. Scott replied, *“Sure. No problem.”* As he went into the bagel shop to buy her egg salad he was annoyed, if not angry. A bagel cost 75 cents. The egg salad cost \$6. He thought, *“Maybe I should get her some caviar with that, too.”* He didn’t say anything caustic as he handed her the coffee and egg salad. Then, she apologized for her request. She explained she could only eat the egg salad because the bagel was too painful for her to chew – her teeth and gums were diseased. When Scott heard her response, he realized he had not understood her situation. Privileged people do not understand what it feels like not to be privileged. A simple encounter with a homeless woman was life altering for Scott. He walked away from her and realized he didn’t see her as a person created in the image of God. He realized that she was poor; but so was he – in a spiritual way. She has dignity. She is loved by God. While she is not “the fittest,” Scott, a minister of the gospel, recalled Jesus resisted the “survival of the fittest” theory. He ministered to blind, lame, leprous, children, women, the poor, and outcast. Everyone mattered to Him. The Samaritans mattered (non-Jews, women with sexual histories). People with zero money, connections and influence matter. The self-righteous Pharisees (Saul) mattered. Wealthy people (Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea). Jesus loved His disciples. Simon was a Zealot who wanted to overthrow Rome and was the avowed enemy of Matthew, the tax collector who was helping to prop up the Roman occupiers of Israel. He loved the fisherman, Simon Peter. He loved James & John even when they jockeyed for prime spot at His side. He loved his betrayer, even though Judas would betray him. Jesus loved the thief on the cross who died beside Him and prayed for forgiveness for those who unjustly crucified Him. Who didn’t Jesus love? No one. He didn’t approve of everyone’s actions, but He offered redemption to the hardened, the hateful, the hypocrites, and the hopeless; to the lost, least and outcast. As Jesus said, *“If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children...how much more does your heavenly Father want to give good gifts to those who love Him.”* Why wouldn’t people want to love Jesus? Maybe because they can’t get past us – those who are in such a hurry to tell them how bad they are that we won’t love them. We won’t even listen to them.

We don't have to condone their actions, but we should never condemn another person who is created in the image of God.

Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Then seek to understand then to be understood. That will help us more than anything else to love God and to love others.