



Week 5 - February 5

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. -James 1:19-20

Listen Closely

According to most communication experts, active listening is the most crucial component of communication. The ability to hear a person's words and accurately interpret their meaning and intent is central to effective dialogue and relationships. However, many of us tend to focus more on speaking and ensuring we are heard and understood.

Many of us experience the embarrassment of rushing to inaccurate conclusions and misunderstanding what is being communicated (read Proverbs 18:13). Our poor listening methods lead to disagreements and conflicts that threaten the peace, harmony, and cooperation of our relationships.

James reminds us to be "quick to hear." This phrase suggests we should "be speedy in our attempts to listen." It emphasizes that our top priority in conversation is to listen accurately and attentively to what is being said. Afterward, we should be "slow to speak and slow to get angry."

Today, allow the Lord to guide you to listen first. Before preparing to speak or allowing yourself to get upset, make sure you are hearing the words being spoken and the intention and information behind them so that you can accurately know how to respond.

Family Question: How can I improve my listening in our family?

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the grace to listen more effectively to engage with others with empathy and accuracy. In Jesus' name, I ask this. Amen.



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Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. -Colossians 4:6

‘Season’ Your Words

I remember the first time I attended a banquet with menu options. Before the event, we were requested to select our preferred meal. On the digital form was an area where we could check a box to indicate whether or not we had any food allergies.

I asked the host why they offered the options instead of determining the menu and offering no alternatives. The person told me that genuine hospitality considered the dynamics of those served. He also understood that the event would not be enjoyable for the host or the guest if they were presented with a meal to which they would respond unfavorably. Instead, they chose to prepare a meal based on the needs and sensitivities of those attending.

This is a great lesson on food hospitality and an excellent lesson on conversational hospitality. When we speak to others, we should always consider their emotional, mental, and spiritual vulnerabilities. Let us choose words and tones that display grace and show them that their hearts matter as much as our message.

Family Question: How can I be more sensitive in how I speak to others?

PRAYER: Lord, guard my tongue so I may use considerate and enriching language towards others. In Jesus’ name, I ask this. AMEN



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And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

-Matthew 6:12

Drop the Charges

If there is one element that poses the most significant difficulty in relationships, it would be that of forgiveness. Whether it is a protective measure or just hurting people desiring to hurt people, releasing the “charges” we hold against others for their offenses seems to be a challenging, if not seemingly impossible, task. However, as impossible as it may seem, Jesus places forgiveness in His model prayer for a reason. His inclusion reminds us that forgiveness is not only possible, it should be a determining factor in whether or not we receive eternal forgiveness.

Forgiveness is usually not practiced for three reasons: 1) we assume our lack of forgiveness has no eternal implications; 2) we forget the depth of the forgiveness we have received; and 3) we think, in some cases, reconciliation is not a wise decision.

Jesus reminds us in the gospels that forgiveness is intended to be a standard response - not a special one - for the Christian (Luke 17:10). It is to be offered to others because we have received forgiveness from the LORD that far exceeds the offense we are forgiving (Matthew 18:32-33). It is so important that the LORD will forgive us eternally based on how we forgive others (Matthew 6:14). Knowing this, it is only wise that we “drop the charges” we have been holding against others. This doesn’t mean that you blindly put yourself in a position to experience the same hurt, but it does mean that you don’t handcuff them to a past hurt. Allow them the benefit of experiencing the mercy you have received.

Family Question: Who has hurt me that I need to forgive?

PRAYER: Lord, give me the grace to drop the charges of those who have hurt me so that we can both experience the freedom that comes with forgiveness. In Jesus’ name, I ask this. Amen.



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Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. -1 Peter 4:10

You're Sent to Serve

There is no more powerful scene of humility in the Bible than the one found in John 13. Jesus, the Messiah, stands up from the table after the meal, removes His outer garment, and girds himself with a towel. He then stoops down and, one by one, begins lifting the disciple's feet and washing them. The Savior of the world assumes the lowest possible task in the house! Then He says, "If I, then, your Lord and Master have washed your feet, you should wash one another's feet."

He was showing us what is at the heart of Christian communities, homes, and lives: servanthood. We are born, gifted, summoned, and sent to serve others – whether or not we know and favor them (Matthew 5:43-48). Only when we approach all human relationships in this way are needs met, hearts are filled, and individuals experience the healing intended to come from our lives.

The world around you is not waiting for another superstar for them to celebrate; they are hoping for a person who will use his or her gifts to see and serve them in a way that will be an answer to prayer and an extension of the love of Jesus.

Family Question: How can I enhance the way I serve others?

PRAYER: Lord, give me the grace to see and discern the needs of those around me. Then, show me how to serve them using the gifts you've given me for their betterment and Your glory. In Jesus' name, I ask this. AMEN