

Are You Listening? (Part 3)
Sermon June 25, 2017

Listening is the most important part of effective communication. In the last few weeks, during the sermon, we focused on communication skills and their importance in families. We heard that God gave us two ears and one mouth. CAN YOU TELL ME PLEASE WHY ????

Hearing is the physical ability given by our Creator. Listening is a skill that we have to learn and put in practice. If we are humble enough to learn more about listening skills, we will be able to understand what another person is saying to us and we will be able to act accordingly.

We have to gain the ability to actively understand all the information clearly which is provided by our spouse, children and friends. If we don't want to learn how to listen, we will destroy our relationships with each other. If we do not develop our listening skills periodically, we will not be able to listen effectively, and we will misunderstand each other. As a further result, we will be sad or mad or angry with the other person, and our own personality will be more and more miserable and unbearable. Then, communication will break down and the sender of the message will easily become frustrated and irritated. Due to a lack of listening skills, we will be distanced from each other, which in a relationship leads to separation and divorce.

In order to have healthy communication, we all should learn HOW to listen.

In counselling, we are talking very often about the importance of active listening. Active listening is a way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding. Often when people talk to each other, they don't listen attentively. They are often distracted, half listening, half thinking about something else.

We agree that we have to turn our face to our conversational partner. We have to put aside our papers, books, the phone and other distractions. We have to look at them, even if they don't look at us. We also learned about the importance of eye contact. If we are shy, or ashamed, or feel guilt or other emotions, we cannot keep the eye contact under some circumstances and we cannot stay focused.

Step 6. RELAX

After we make eye contact, it is very important to feel relaxed during any conversation. We don't have to stare fixedly at the other person. The important thing is to be attentive. We simply have to be present, to give attention, and to be ready to serve the person which is talking to us. Try not to focus on the speaker's accent or speech mannerisms to the point where they become distractions. Finally, make sure that you are not distracted by your own thoughts, feelings, or biases.

Step 7: Keep an open mind.

Often when people are in a conversation, they cannot listen carefully because they are busy with their own thoughts and judgements as they are criticizing the other person, saying to themselves things like: OMG she is getting so old; look at those wrinkles on her face; this guy did not shave carefully this morning; she should take a look in the mirror before she is leaving her home; OMG

those lipsticks are sooooooo red. She should pick a different colour; (... please continue what people say during a conversation when they judge each other).

Please be very careful to listen without judging the other person or mentally criticizing the things he/she tells you. If what the person says alarms you, go ahead and feel alarmed, but don't say to yourself, "Well, that is so stupid". In these cases, you cannot listen effectively.

Step 8: Listen without jumping to conclusions.

When we want to share something in a conversation, we are using a special language to represent the thoughts and feelings we have inside in our brain and our heart. When we are talking to a person, we don't know what kind of thoughts and feelings they really have, or what impacted them lately. This is why every time we have to listen to each other very carefully.

I know people who cannot listen effectively. They try to speed the conversation by interrupting and finishing the sentences. These people are not listening to the other person but they follow their own thoughts, and they show that they really don't care about the other person's thoughts.

I had conversations like that with similar kind of people when I got very frustrated and I said to them: "Do you want to hear what I have to say or do you want to force on me what your thoughts are?"

Just remember how often we plead for God's attention and certainly we expect our Lord to listen to our prayers. It is so good to know that Our Heavenly Father assures us that He hears us when we call on Him, and He is an active listener when we pray. We have to know that, for a true fellowship to exist between God and us, we too must listen to His voice through Scripture, through fellow believers, through the Holy Spirit and through small inner voices. God always has something to tell us. He wants to encourage us, sometimes reprove us, and give us spiritual perspective as we journey.

If we are expecting God to listen to us, we have to listen to each other as well. May the Holy Spirit help us to be better listeners. Amen