



STUDY GUIDE

February 6, 2022

Message Series:

The Big 4

Message Title:

Listen Well

Teaching Pastor:

Brian Hughes

Warm-up/Icebreaker:

Who's your go-to band or artist when you can't decide on something to listen to?

Pray:

Dear Lord, we come before You open and ready to listen. Give us a pure heart and a right attitude as we learn how to carefully listen to not only You but to those around us. We ask that Your Holy Spirit speak to us and give us wisdom and direction so that we can communicate in a way that honors You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Get Started:

- Briefly share a time when you got caught not listening. How did it affect you?

"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak. Why does James have to admonish us this way? Because the hard truth is that we don't listen well. If we're being honest, most of us prefer to talk - to share what we think and what we feel and the way we see things. In a world where we post our problems and tweet our frustrations...now more than ever before, everyone is talking, and no one is listening. And we want to filter what we hear so that what we hear only reinforces what we WANT to hear." - Pastor Brian Hughes

Read James 1:19.

Pastor Brian shared three ways in which we can learn how to be quick to listen:

1. Real Listening is undivided, undistracted attention.
 2. Real Listening is a fully engaged quest to understand.
 3. Real Listening is an attempt to walk a mile in someone else's shoes.
- Which one of these comes most naturally to you? Which one needs the most attention?

Watch and Discuss Video: (running time 13:35 min.)

"Whoever has ears let them hear (**Matthew 11:15, 13:9, 13:43**). When he uses this phrase, I think Jesus is saying you're hearing me, but you're not listening to me. Listening requires a skill that is more than passive. It requires a skill most people never develop or employ it because it's hard. It requires empathic listening. We are not trained to listen well. James is not talking about speed, he's talking about intent... When James says, "be quick to listen, slow to speak," most people assume that, as long as you're not saying anything, nodding your head and occasionally making an mmmm hmmm sound, that they're listening. But real listening is not simply not talking. Real listening is a quest. It's a treasure hunt, because there is a treasure inside of the one who is talking, and if you can understand them, you'll know them as a person better than you did before. They ARE the treasure!" - Pastor Brian Hughes

- Share any system or code language you have in place with the people around you to let each other know when you are not listening well (i.e. Pastor Brian's example of "I feel you've stopped listening")?
- Does the concept that you have to be vulnerable to practice empathic listening (desiring to see the world from your perspective) challenge you on any level? Is empathic listening seen as a sign of weakness in your opinion? Share why or why not.

"Here's how it goes: I really want to understand where you're coming from and I mean it. If you'll help me along the way I'd really like to listen to you. Then I'm going to try to express your feelings regardless of the words you say. When you're in the listening posture you are not evaluating and you're not arguing. You're not arguing the facts even if the person is coming at you. And even if what they are saying is factually untrue. This is not the moment to correct their facts. If you do that, you have stopped listening. Even if they are wrong you do not correct them. This is not the time. Perception is as strong as reality. How many times do people get upset about something that is not true? You will have an opportunity. So we say real listening is seeking first to understand and then to be understood. You'll get your turn, but only after you've really tried to put yourself in the other's shoes." -Pastor Brian Hughes

- What do you think about the concept that listening is not agreement, but validation of another's feelings? Do you use the "peeling the onion" technique that Pastor Brian mentioned? If you don't, do you feel like this is something you will try? What other techniques do you use when engaging in moments like this to get to the core issue?

Reflect and Commit:

"In relationships, it's even more important. Because understanding is the key to intimacy. And listening is the key to understanding. And this is ultimately tied to your spiritual life. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, "He who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God." -Pastor Brian Hughes

Read 1 Samuel 3:7-11 and John 10:27.

- Name a time where you felt you clearly heard from God. How did it impact your life?
- How would you describe your relationship with God right now in terms of taking intentional time to listen to Him? What is one thing you can do this week to make time to listen to God more purposefully?
- Share prayer requests and then take 1-2 minutes of silence to listen to God, before closing in prayer.

Pray:

Dear Lord, for us to have the best life possible we need to listen well and know Your voice. In doing so, help us to become known as those who listen first, speak second and value each other as treasures deserving of attention. We acknowledge that it's through this practice that we develop richer relationships with You and each other. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.