



Marriage Growth-Track

Week 5 - Day 2

Listening with the intent to Hear

by Brian and Susan Moore

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

We've referenced this verse before, and there's a reason: it is part and parcel one of the most important hallmarks of a successful marriage. Master this, and your marriage has an exponentially greater chance of becoming a fruitful, enjoyable, and fulfilling partnership. This is what we see in these verses:

- In times of conflict, everyone desires to have their point heard
- Listening with intent to hear and love should be our goal
- Anger hinders our ability to hear, speak, and demonstrate Christ-like love

During times of anger, it is so easy to focus on what is troubling our heart, our mind, and our soul. We want to be heard, acknowledged, and validated—even if it's at the expense of fully listening to our spouse's perspective. When they push back, we push back, and before you know it, a full-fledged argument ensues – accusations are made, blame is placed, and the real issue becomes buried beneath a pile of hurtful comments.

But remember this: God created us in His image and with that came self-control – the ability to regulate our emotions, thoughts, and behavior whenever we are faced with temptations, impulses, or conflicts. In other words, because we are a new creation in Christ, we have within us the ability to override our initial reactions and intentionally respond in love. Because of our commitment as Christ-followers, honoring that relationship with Him always takes priority over 'winning' a marital disagreement. Obedience to Christ trumps human conflicts every time.

We come by this self-centered focus naturally. Consider a newborn baby: every one of us is born with a nature that seeks to have our needs met... first. A baby isn't concerned with if it's a convenient time to eat or sleep or to be held; a baby wants what a baby wants, no questions asked. A baby receives, but seldom intentionally gives. As adults, however, we are called to demonstrate a receptive and compassionate heart to

those around us—especially our spouses! When we open our ears, hold our tongue, and control our emotions in a mature manner, a strange thing happens—we find that one of our own greatest needs is met; not our need to be loved, but to love others.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you sit down as a couple and simply talk to one another? Do you find it difficult to control your emotions?
2. When a conflict comes, do you listen with the intent to hear and love?
3. Do you welcome conflict, or view it as a threat?

Action Step:

Develop a conscious strategy or game plan for how you can resolve your differences.

Prayer:

Father in Heaven, thank you for your never-ending self-control toward our shortcomings. We seek the control of our emotions and the ability to open our ears and truly hear our partner. Teach us to have a receptive heart and the wisdom to use our tongue to demonstrate your love. Open our eyes to the needs of those around us. Show us our heart and the path to righteousness that you desire for us.