

“How to Improve Your Hearing”

Text: James 1:9

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Park Boulevard Presbyterian Church (www.pbpc.org)

Oakland, California

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Pray!

This Thanksgiving we spent our day with both sides of our families. We visited the Gelini side first and saw family, some that we don't see too often and then went to Margaret's side for the main meal. What struck me this year was the importance of relationships; relationships with our families, friends and others. I believe we can all use God's help in “Building Better Relationships”, especially during this time of year.

I want to talk with you this morning about one building block in relationships that is very important – listening. Learning to listen is very important.

- The source of many of our problems with other people in relationships is we just don't listen (Number one complaint with relationships is listening: “He doesn't listen to me.” “She doesn't understand me.”)
- You're going to spend approximately 40% of your waking hours listening for the rest of your life. So it's a skill you need to learn to develop. Most of us listen at only about 25% efficiency.

Today, we're going to look at “How to Improve Your Hearing.” It is a skill you can develop. If you learn how to improve your hearing, you'll have fewer arguments, you'll make more friends, you'll be a lot wiser, and you'll be even healthier.

What is listening? James 1:19, *“Take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.”*

- If you are quick to listen and slow to speak you will be slow to anger. If you have a problem with anger it's because you are quick to speak and slow to listen.

What is listening? It's more than hearing words and sounds. It's more than waiting your turn to talk. I think one of the reasons bars are so popular is, not because of the drinks, but bartenders will listen to anybody. We pay them to listen to us. In fact, we will pay others to just listen to us.

- A friend is somebody who will listen to you when nobody else will.

Why is it so important? Because it satisfies a deep need in human beings. The need to be appreciated, the need to receive attention. We all want attention. When you listen to somebody it shows that you care about them, that you think they're important. Listening loves. If you love someone you will listen to them.

- So if you want to improve your relationships with your mate, kids, boss, friends at school, you've got to improve your hearing.

This morning I want to give you three hearing blocks and three hearing aids.

WHAT HINDERS OUR HEARING?

1. PRESUMPTION keeps us from hearing.

- A. Proverbs 18:13, *"He who answers before listening, that is his folly and his shame."* The Living Bible says, *"It's stupid to decide before knowing all the facts."* We get into trouble when we start assuming things.
- B. How often have you gotten into an argument because you assumed something? We do it all the time: "But I assumed you meant..." And you get into trouble because when you're assuming, you're not listening.
- C. Three wrong assumptions that are always wrong:
 1. That there is only one way to see things. There's not; there are many ways to see things.
 2. People never change. They do change and we need to give them the right to change.
 3. I can figure your motives. You can't. I can't figure out my motives half the time, much less figure out yours. Only God has the right to judge because only He can figure out motives.
- D. Presumptions blocks hearing.

2. IMPATIENCE BLOCKS HEARING

- A. You don't listen when you're impatient. How do you know when you're being impatient with somebody?
 1. You interrupt. Have you ever heard someone talking and they're trying to figure out a word they can't think of and you've already thought of it? So you give it to them! You interrupt them. You're pushing them along because you're being impatient.
 2. You jump to conclusions. When you jump to conclusions you get into trouble. Proverbs 29:20, *"Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him?"*
- B. A new employee of a large insurance company walked up to a paper shredder, stood before it looking confused. "Need some help?" the senior secretary asked. "Yes, how does this thing work?" "It's simple," she said as she took the fat report from her colleague and fed it into the shredder. "See?" "I see," he said, "But how many copies does it make?" Jumping to conclusions.
 1. Proverbs 19:11, *"A man's wisdom gives him patience."*
When I want to show my wisdom, I'm patient with employees, my wife, my kids. When you listen you're wise.

3. PRIDE

- A. Pride makes us defensive and unteachable. Proverbs 12:15, *“The way of a fool seems right, but a wise man listens to advice.”* You can learn from anyone if you’re willing to ask questions. Most of us can learn from anyone if we’re willing to ask questions. Most of us would rather appear smart than be smart. So we’re afraid to ask questions. There’s no such thing as a dumb question. The only dumb question is the one not asked!
- B. People say, “I learn from experience.” That’s great. You ought to learn from experience, but it’s wiser to learn from the experience of others. You don’t have time to make all the mistakes yourself. You don’t have the time to do it all. Life is too short. Learn from the experiences of others.
- C. How do we do that? By asking questions. How do you do that? By putting down your pride and being teachable and being open. Proverbs 20:5, *“Though good advice lies deep within a counselor’s heart, the wise man will draw it out.”* Every one of you can teach me something if I just know the right question to ask; if I know how to draw it out of you. We need to learn to ask questions.
 - 1. There are two perfect ages: 4 and 14. At four you know all the questions: at fourteen you know all the answers.
- D. The secret of listening is putting down your pride and asking questions.

II. THREE HEARING AIDS

Let me give you three hearing aids that will improve your hearing so you can have better relationships. All three of these are seen in the life of Jesus.

1. Listen with your eyes.

- A. Approximately 80% of all conversation is non-verbal. Gestures, facial expressions, the way you look, body language. Mark 10:21, *“Jesus looked at him (talking about the rich young ruler) and loved him.”* If you love people you’ll look at them. It is a gift when you look people in the eye. It says, “You have my undivided attention. You are valued. You are significant. You are worth listening to and I’m going to prove it by looking you in the eye.”
 - 1. Parents to kids, husbands and wives – eyeball to eyeball.
 - 2. If your mate or kids don’t get your attention in a positive way, they will get your attention in a negative way.

2. Listen with your heart.

- A. A good example of this is in John 4:16-19 where Jesus is with the woman at the well. The woman is trying to get Jesus off on all kinds of doctrinal speculations: Which mountain should we worship on? Our tradition says this, your tradition says that. Jesus cuts through the whole bologna. Lady, your problem is that you have bad relationships.

You've been married five times and the guy you're living with now you're not married to.

1. The issue was that Jesus was listening with the heart. He was looking beneath all the words and listening for the hurt. You listen for the hurt by listening with the heart. Be sympathetic. Find the pain, find the hurt. Everybody's hurting somewhere. It may be hidden but everybody's got a hurt. The key to listening with the heart is to find the truth behind the words and deal with it. Do you do that when you're listening to your mate or child?
2. What's behind the anger, the moodiness, the sadness?

3. You make the time to listen.

- A. You put it in the program. Calendar it in your schedule. Experts tell us that the average couple in America spends 26 minutes a week in serious conversation. For many of you, that may be a gross exaggeration. In our area over 80% of the people both husband and wife work outside of the home. We come home for bed and breakfast and a kiss goodnight. Nobody is really talking or listening to anybody else. They're living separate lives together in the same home.
- B. I challenge you to mark your schedule. Date your mate. You need a weekly date with your mate where you go out and talk. Don't go to the movies. You don't talk to each other there. Go to the park, out to dinner, and talk and look each other in the face and say, "What's going on in your life?"
- C. Jesus' life was one of people interrupting Him. Yet, He made time to listen to them. People are always more important than tasks.

I believe if we practice these with our kids and with our mate and with the people we work with and with the people we go to school with, life would be so much easier.

PRAYER

Father, help us to be people who are good listeners, that we might not be presumptuous or impatient, or prideful, but that we would listen with our ears, our eyes, our heart. Some of us just need to make time to listen to our family this week. And help us to be good listeners to You. In Jesus' name. Amen.