



THE WAYS

Listen Generously. Be quick to listen and do so with your undivided attention. Minimize the distractions and let go of the need to agree or disagree. Suspend your judgment and be curious to know more rather than jumping to conclusions. Above all, listen to *understand*.

1. What does it mean to listen to understand?

READ James 1:19-27

1. What or who would James want you to listen to?
2. Why do you think James has such a strong emphasis on your tongue?
3. How is the idea of the *Ways* supported by verses 23-25.

Scenario: A church leader said something from the pulpit that you think is outright incorrect. It is a misuse of Scripture; you're honestly not sure how a Christian can read the Bible and believe what they said. Soon after, you are in a conversation with them. The topic comes up; and as they are talking, you find yourself getting angry.

1. What is your natural tendency in a situation like this?
2. Why do you think we get upset when people interpret Scripture differently than us?
3. What makes it difficult for you to listen to understand (or listen sympathetically) to a person who believes something different than you?
4. What can you do or remind yourself of that will help you listen to them *generously*?

We don't have the market cornered on truth. Even beliefs you have held since you were a child have the ability to be incorrect. This is one of the greatest joys of the Church: that we are surrounded by brothers and sisters who don't believe everything as we believe it. It keeps us nimble in our thinking and tender in our faith. We can listen to disprove, or we can listen to understand but not both. *Listen Generously* and find that God is larger than you anticipated.

PRAY TOGETHER.

(Pray that God would put someone in your life who practices faith differently than you do.)

DAILY Devotional

MONDAY: *READ:* Prov. 18:12+13. *THINK:* When we think we have all the answers, there is no reason to listen to others. They should listen to us. The haughty have no reason to pause, but the humble *Listen Generously*. You never know how a person's beliefs can shape your faith, and you never if know if God has chosen the person in front of you to be His messenger. *PRAY:* that God humbles you.

TUESDAY: *READ:* Prov. 17:3+4. *THINK:* It feels good to be trusted with a secret; but while we are called to *Listen Generously*, not all things are worth listening to. Listening generously doesn't mean giving a friend space to badmouth their wife or space to spread the latest gossip. Have nothing to do with idle rumors, instead encourage one another to *Speak the Truth with Love* first. *PRAY:* God would convict you of places you listen to gossip.

WEDNESDAY: *READ:* Zech. 7:11-12 *THINK:* God is not done talking, but often He chooses to speak through others. Prophets have always spoken for God but have rarely been listened to. We *Listen Generously* because the same Holy Spirit that lives in us lives in other Christians, and you never know what truth or message they can bring to you. *PRAY:* God would put someone in your life that you need to hear from.

THURSDAY: *READ:* Prov. 14:29. *THINK:* Sometimes what honestly gets in the way of listening generously is time. You have a lot going on; and when you have the luxury of free time, it's difficult to spend it Listening to someone we disagree with. Understanding and wisdom, though, aren't gained by running to the next task to accomplish. They are gained by taking the time to listen to one another and hear from their faith, even if it has a different shape from your own. *PRAY:* that God would help you make margins in your life so you have time to *Listen Generously*.

FRIDAY: *READ:* 2 Timothy 2:23+24. *THINK:* There is a difference between a disagreement and a quarrel. Christians are called not to be quarrelsome; that doesn't mean we won't disagree. The difference is this: the quarrelsome listen to disprove and overcome. When we *Listen Generously*, we affirm that, though we disagree, we are brothers and sisters in Christ. *PRAY:* that God would put fellow Christians in your life that you disagree with.

SATURDAY: *READ:* James 2:1-9. *THINK:* Do not merely listen to those that sound educated or those that dress like they are worth listening to. Isn't it true that God often works in the least expected ways? Likewise, do not merely *Listen Generously* to adults. Think of Timothy and his struggle to be heard. When we *Listen Generously* without favoritism, we hear from those who are rarely given a voice. *PRAY:* that God would convict you of the ways you play favorites.