



BEN WASHINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH

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Wednesday Noon Bible Study

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SERMON SERIES

“Serving in HD (High Definition)”

PART 4 - Listening — Leading With Open Ears Before an Open Mouth

Key Thought

Servant leaders listen to understand before they speak to be understood.

One of the greatest gifts a leader can give another person is the feeling:

- “You heard me.”

James 1:19:

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”

Notice the order James gives:

SWIFT TO HEAR → SLOW TO SPEAK → SLOW TO WRATH

That order matters.

Many conflicts escalate because we reverse it:

Quick to speak → Quick to become angry → Slow to listen

Hearing vs. Listening

Hearing is the physical ability to perceive sound.

Listening is the intentional decision to pay attention, understand, process, and appropriately respond to what another person is communicating.

You can hear every word someone says and still fail to listen.

Sometimes while another person is speaking, we are:

- Preparing our response.
- Planning our defense.
- Thinking about something else.
- Looking at our phone.
- Deciding whether we agree.
- Waiting for them to stop talking.
- Assuming we already know what they are going to say.

Leadership Principle

Listening requires more than open ears. It requires an open mind, an attentive heart, and sometimes a closed mouth.

SERVANT LEADERS LISTEN BEFORE THEY ANSWER

Proverbs 18:13

“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”

Scripture identifies a common leadership mistake:

Responding before understanding.

We hear part of the story and immediately:

- Give advice.
- Make a decision.
- Assign blame.
- Correct somebody.
- Defend ourselves.
- Draw conclusions.

Proverbs calls this folly.

Listening Prevents Wrong Assumptions

We often fill gaps in information with assumptions.

We assume:

- We know why someone did something.
- We understand their motives.
- We know what happened.
- We know what they are going to say.

But assumptions can create unnecessary conflict.

Listening Gives You Information

Good leaders understand:

You cannot make good decisions with bad information.

And sometimes the reason leaders have bad information is because they have not listened long enough to obtain good information.

Listening Communicates Respect

When you genuinely listen, you communicate:

“You matter.”

“Your perspective matters.”

“I may not agree with you, but I am willing to hear you.”

Leadership Principle

Listening to someone does not mean agreeing with them. It means respecting them enough to understand what they are saying before you respond.

JESUS ASKED QUESTIONS EVEN WHEN HE KNEW THE ANSWER

One of the fascinating characteristics of Jesus' ministry is the number of questions He asked.

Jesus possessed divine knowledge, yet He frequently allowed people to speak.

Consider:

- “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” — Mark 10:51
- “Whom say ye that I am?” — Matthew 16:15
- “What seek ye?” — John 1:38
- “Why are ye so fearful?” — Mark 4:40
- “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” — John 9:35
- “Lovest thou me?” — John 21:17

Why ask questions if Jesus already knew?

Because questions do more than collect information.

Questions:

Encourage reflection.

Reveal the heart.

Clarify needs.

Create conversation.

Give people an opportunity to express themselves.

The Lesson for Leaders

Leaders sometimes talk too much because we believe leadership means always having the answer.

Jesus demonstrates that sometimes leadership means asking the right question.

Instead of immediately saying:

"Here's what you need to do."

Try asking:

- "Tell me what's happening."
- "How are you feeling about this?"
- "What do you think the problem is?"
- "What have you already tried?"
- "How can I help?"

Leadership Principle

Great leaders don't only have good answers. They learn to ask good questions.

FOUR PRACTICES OF A LISTENING LEADER**1. Give Undivided Attention**

When possible:

- Put the phone down.
- Stop multitasking.
- Make appropriate eye contact.
- Remove unnecessary distractions.

Your body language should communicate: "I am present."

2. Don't Interrupt

Allow people to finish.

Sometimes the most important thing someone needs to say comes after the thing you wanted to interrupt.

3. Ask Clarifying Questions

Try:

- "When you say that, what do you mean?"
- "Can you give me an example?"
- "How did that affect you?"
- "What would you like to see happen?"

Questions prevent assumptions.

4. Repeat What You Heard

Say:

- “Let me make sure I understand what you're saying...”

Then summarize. This gives the person an opportunity to say:

“Yes, exactly.” or: “No, that's not quite what I meant.”

Leadership Principle

The goal is not simply for you to hear their words. The goal is to accurately understand their meaning.