



LISTENING ON PURPOSE, PART 1

The Banana Principle

May 14, 2022

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

James 1:19, 20 (NIV) • “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.”

Proverbs 10:19 (NIV) • “Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.”

Proverbs 12:13-23 (NIV) • “Evildoers are trapped by their sinful talk, and so the innocent escape trouble. From the fruit of their lips people are filled with good things. . . . The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice. Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult. . . . The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. . . . The prudent keep their knowledge to themselves, but a fool’s heart blurts out folly.”

Proverbs 17:19 (NIV) • “Whoever loves a quarrel loves sin.”

Proverbs 18:2-21 (NIV) • “Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions. . . . The lips of fools bring them strife, and their mouths invite a beating. The mouths of fools are their undoing, and their lips

are a snare to their very lives. . . . To answer before listening—that is folly and shame. . . . A brother wronged is more unyielding than a fortified city; disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel. From the fruit of their mouth a person’s stomach is filled; with the harvest of their lips they are satisfied. The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”

Proverbs 19:2-27 (NIV) • “Desire without knowledge is not good—how much more will hasty feet miss the way! . . . A person’s wisdom yields patience; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense. . . . Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise. . . . Stop listening to instruction, . . . and you will stray from the words of knowledge.”

Psalms 141:3 (NIV) • “Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.”

James 3:8 (NIV) • “It [the tongue] is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT’S TO BE SAID ABOUT “LISTENING ON PURPOSE, PART 1”

“We were given two ears and only one mouth because God knew that listening is twice

as hard as talking!” (unknown source). There would be fewer misunderstandings, less fighting, and fewer wars if people would be quiet, listen more, and talk less! To understand what someone is saying, you must listen well. Look for other signals to help you clue in to what is being said as you listen—watch their facial expressions, hear the tone of voice, notice if their body is tense or relaxed. These are clues to help you identify what is being said. One other thing to help you listen well: let go of any preconceived thoughts and ideas, and just listen.

Not only is listening well necessary for good relationships between families and friends, but it will also help determine your students’ future success in life for here and eternity. This lesson and the one that follows will introduce the students to, and give them opportunities to practice, effective listening skills that can be used as tools for personal growth and for spreading the gospel.

C. WHERE WE’RE GOING WITH “LISTENING ON PURPOSE, PART 1”

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Understand the importance of listening in relationships.
2. Learn the techniques of listening well.
3. Practice those techniques in their daily lives.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) 8½" x 11" (A4) sheets of paper, one for each student.

Connecting • Bibles and/or student lessons, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk.

Applying • (Activity A) white/chalkboard, markers/chalk; (Activity B) “What They Really Meant to Say” handout (p. 75), pens or pencils.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE’VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Distribute an 8½" x 11" (A4) sheet of paper to each student.

Get set • Have the students sit so they can’t observe what others are doing.

Go • Say: **I want you to follow my directions exactly without asking any questions of me or of your classmates. Without looking at your neighbor, fold your paper in half. Now tear off the upper left-hand corner. Now**

fold the paper in half again and tear off the lower right-hand corner. Now fold the paper in half again and tear off the upper and lower left-hand corners. Finally, unfold the paper and compare it with your neighbor's.

Debriefing • Ask: What does your sheet look like compared to the person next to you? (different) **Why do you think they are different or the same?** (We heard the same thing differently. We interpreted it differently.) **If this were a test, who would be to blame for the results being so different?** (you) **What could I have done differently to make it easier or for the results to be more uniform?** (Allowed us to ask questions. Given clearer instructions.) **What could you have done?** (Ignored your directions to not ask questions.) **Why didn't you?** (You told us not to.) **What does this say about our communication?** (It's difficult to get your point across or fully understand when you can't clarify.)

Say: It's difficult to listen well when you can't ask questions. Giving and receiving feedback, asking questions, and clarifying are all a part of listening well.

B. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

Say: One of the texts in this week's lesson is **James 1:19**. Ask a volunteer to find and read it aloud. **Today we will explore the how-to's of doing what we are told to in this passage.**

Share the following illustration in your own words.

The story is told "about a farmer who wanted to buy a parrot. He went to a pet shop and told the proprietor what he wanted.

"'I have just what you have in mind,' said the store owner. With that he slipped into a back room and came back with an owl. 'This is an especially fine bird,' he said.

"The owl sat perched on a bar and stared . . . just stared. 'But will he learn to talk?' asked the amazed customer.

"'Of course,' said the store owner. 'You just have to be patient and keep talking to him.'

"So the farmer took the owl, and was quite pleased with his purchase.

"A few weeks later the two men met again, and the pet shop owner asked, 'Well, how's your parrot? Is he talking yet?'

"'No,' the farmer replied, 'he's not talking, but he certainly knows how to listen.'" —Pastor Hermann Wilm, in Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*. Copyright © 1998 Paul Lee Tan. All rights reserved. Database © 1998 NavPress Software.

Debriefing • Ask: In what way was the owl listening well? (It wasn't talking. It was quiet.) **Is being quiet all it takes to listen well?** (No, you need to try to understand what the other person is saying. Sometimes you will have to say something—ask a question or something.) **What kind of relationship was being built between the owl and the farmer?** (None; the man didn't even realize that the owl wasn't a parrot.) **Say:** Obviously there is more to listening on purpose than just closing our mouths and letting the other person talk.

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Ask: Who has influenced you more in this life? **The people who did most of the talking or those who listened to you?** (Encourage the students to share examples, experiences.) **Say:** Listening is one of the greatest skills an agent of God's kingdom can have. Listening well does not just happen. It is a skill that needs to be practiced and refined over time. **James 1:19 tells us to be quick to listen and slow to speak.** (If you have not done so already, have a volunteer find and read the verse aloud.) **Ask:** How can we be quick to listen? Here are a few tips to use when someone else is talking (so our listening will be more effective than the owl's!).

Share the following concepts in your own words. Ideas are always reinforced if they are written as well as spoken. Write this list on the board as you speak.

1. Put aside your feelings, prejudices, arguments, need to impress, and preconceived ideas.
2. Focus. Don't daydream, let your mind wander, rehearse what you are going to say next, allow yourself to be distracted, or look for an opening to jump into the conversation.
3. Don't interrupt—unless you need brief clarification or there is a fire.
4. Listen and watch for emotions being displayed. Ninety-three percent of the message is communicated in that way.

Of course, you have to know when to do these things. These come with practice, but more important, they come from listening—to the Holy Spirit. Before you can listen to humans well, you have to be open to the Holy Spirit's revealing to you your prejudices, helping you focus, and knowing when to clarify and how to read emotions. Prayer and the study of God's Word open our minds and hearts to the needs of those around us. Only after you have done these two things can you "be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19, NIV).

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath's section of the lesson.

Debriefing • Ask: What problem did the mother and daughter have? (They were not communicating. They could not hear what the other was saying.) **Ask: What did the mother use to help her listen?** (banana) **Ask: How was using the banana helpful?** (Because the mother wasn't talking, she could hear the daughter. The daughter could talk and share her feelings and points of view.) **Ask: Is the banana important?** (No. It was a tool to learn to listen.) **Ask: How can we be like the mother in this story to our friends and families?** (Listen to what people are really saying, not be offended by how they say it, not take what they say personally.)

Say: To listen well, we have to get beyond people's anger and demands and hear what they really need.

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Present the following scenario:

You really want to be with your friends, but no one can drive you to the school where everyone is meeting. You whine, cry, storm, sulk, slam doors, and try the silent treatment on the family, but still no one will take you. You accuse everyone of hating you and ruining your life. Later, your older brother hisses, "Pipe down, Mom and Dad both lost their jobs today." You feel really bad for the way you behaved. What lesson did you learn from this? (Encourage discussion.)

Say: The book of Proverbs has some great things to say about our response when things don't seem to be going our way. Let's look at some of those verses. Have the students find and read **Proverbs 12:13-16, 18, 23; 18:2, 6, 7, 13, 19-21; 19:2, 11, 20, 27.**

Say: Tough words, aren't they? No one likes to be called a fool, but we don't have to be slaves to our foolish (sinful) behavior. God promises us that He will help us overcome our tendency to react rather than observe and listen. Let's read some of those promises.

Have the students read **Proverbs 19:20** and **Psalm 141:3**

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Have the students divide into pairs.

Say: Within your pairs I want you to have a conversation in which one of you talks and the other listens. The talker may talk about whatever is on their mind. The listener will listen and observe the talker. Notice how

the person feels about the subject, whether they are interested or uninterested, whether or not they are telling how they really feel or are hiding something, what outcome they want regarding the subject, what kind of body language or voice inflection (high, low, quivery, angry, panicked) they use. You have about five minutes to talk. I will let you know when to stop. Give the students three to five minutes to converse.

(Write the list of things the observer is to observe where all can see.)

Say: Now reverse the roles and repeat the exercise.

Debriefing • Ask: What did you hear the person saying? (Ask the person's partner: Is that what you meant?) **How did the person feel about the topic?** (excited, bored) **How did you know?** (bright eyes, didn't look at me) **What did their voice sound like?** (chirpy, high-pitched, loud, slurred or mumbled words) **How were they sitting?** (upright posture, at edge of seat, slouched)

Ask: What was the hardest thing about being the talker? (Thinking of something to say. Letting the other person know how I really felt.) **The listener?** (Trying to be really interested in what the other person was saying. Staying focused. Not laughing.) **What kinds of things did you have to do to stay interested in what the other person was saying?** (Ignore my friends and other people. Not think about anything else. Pretend to be interested. Look at the person.)

Say: Like the mother in our story, sometimes you have to go beyond words to understand what another person is saying. Only 7 percent of what is said is communicated in words. Listening well means reading emotions, body language, and tone of voice to get the real message.

B. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Distribute the "What They Really Meant to Say" handout (p. 75) and pens or pencils. Have the students get into groups of three or four and work together to complete it. (Some students will have already begun the activity.) When everyone is finished have them report back to the class.

Debriefing • Say: Often listening well begins with how we respond to others. When people are overly excited, shouting, and frowning, a substance called adrenaline rushes through their bodies. It changes the whole atmosphere around them. They become part of what is called the "fight or flight syndrome." If they don't leave, they will be ready to fight verbally or physically. Not only do they get themselves upset, they may have the same effect on you. The way they are acting can affect your ability to listen to them. And that's why God in His wisdom says, "Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19, NIV). When someone is out of control, by God's grace we can help to restore peace by the way we respond to them.

C. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Why is listening well so important?
2. List three important things you must do in order to listen well.
3. What shouldn't you do when someone else is talking?
4. What else should you pay attention to other than a person's words?
5. Describe a recent conversation that went badly and tell what you could have done to help it go better.
6. What is the best way to start a difficult conversation? Give an example.

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

A proverb from an unknown source says, "We were given two ears but only one mouth." God knew that listening was twice as hard as talking. Listening well may be one of the hardest

things we will ever do, but it is also the most important thing we can do as members of our families and communities and of the family of God.

Listening well is a skill that, as we've seen today, can be practiced. It must be practiced for our future success in school and careers. Even more important, we must practice listening well, because the world is depending on citizens of the kingdom to listen and respond to their needs.

FOR LESSON SEVEN:

THIS HANDOUT IS FOR THE APPLICATION ACTIVITY.

What They Really Meant to Say

What _____ said: _____

What _____ really meant to say was: _____

What _____ said: _____

What _____ really meant to say was: _____

Now, record how listening this way has affected your relationship with someone.

What _____ said: _____

What _____ really meant to say was: _____

What I said to: _____

How _____ reacted: _____



STUDENT LESSON

LISTENING ON PURPOSE, PART 1 The Banana Principle

May 14, 2022

Sabbath

FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips” (Psalm 141:3, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 14, Unity in the Body of Christ:** “We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. . . . This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 58, 59.

THE BANANA PRINCIPLE

“A woman once came to me and told me that she had learned to use the ‘banana principle’ with her teenage daughter.

“I wondered, ‘What on earth is the “banana principle”?’

“She explained. She’d noticed that her daughter often clammed up when they got into a discussion. The girl just wouldn’t share what was really on her heart.

“One day the woman got a banana from the kitchen, sat beside her daughter, and asked a question. While the girl answered, the mother very deliberately peeled the banana and took a bite. After she chewed the piece, she asked

another question and took another bite. And so it went, through the evening. She found that her daughter opened up about a lot of things.

“What had happened? The mother had made sure she listened after she asked a question. She didn’t rush in with a comment or criticism while her daughter was answering. She just listened and chewed, and chewed, and listened.

“The ‘banana principle’ simply means take time to listen. Ask, and then listen carefully.

“Jesus was a master at asking questions and patiently listening to the answers people gave. Jesus focused on others. Most people focus on themselves. To them, listening is simply a pause. They can hardly wait for the other person to stop talking so they can say what is on their minds. They are more interested in unloading their thoughts than really hearing the answer.

“Here is a vital principle. You can’t learn what is in another individual’s mind if you do all the talking. The essence of Christianity is concern for others. Love allows other people the freedom to share their inmost thoughts and feelings. To love another is to genuinely care. . . .

“You cannot love me if you do not know me. And you cannot know me if you don’t take the time to listen to my heart. So grab a banana.

Peel it. Ask a question and take a bite. Then listen with your heart as well as your ears.”—Mark

Finley, *Solid Ground* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald®, 2003), p. 174.

Sunday

RESPONDING

- » Read Proverbs 18:2-13.
- » Sheilah and her mother seem to always be fighting. Sheilah’s mother will say something, and Sheilah will react by sighing or rolling her eyes. Sometimes Sheilah just ignores her mother. There are times that one or the other of them will respond by saying, “You never listen to me!” or just walk away shaking their heads. Sheilah and her mom are frustrated. What can each of them do to make things better between them?

Monday

BIBLE ANSWERS ON UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

- » Read Psalm 133:1; Ephesians 2:14, 16; Ephesians 4:3.
- » God wants us to get along in our families as well as in the church family. With Jesus in our hearts, it is easier to be loving and kind. He brings us together in unity. He knows how much happier and more peaceful our lives would be if we would get along! In Christ we can put aside our own desires, thoughts, feelings, and opinions and open our hearts to be kind, understanding, and forgiving.
- » What are some ways you can bring peace and understanding into your family situation?

- » Unscramble the words and phrases in the word bank and write them on the lines below the scrambled words. Next, place the corrected words/phrases in the correct blank spaces in the Bible verse from the New King James Version to learn how we can show unity in our homes.

oGd fo escape	gniref- fusgnlo	rehtona eon htwi gnirabe	evlo	lufknaht eb
ssendnki	rehtona eon gnivigrfo	seicrme rednte	strahe royu ni elru	ytilimhu

“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on _____, _____, meekness, _____; _____, and _____, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on _____, which is the bond of perfection. And let the _____, to which also you were called in one body; and _____” (Colossians 3:12-15).

Tuesday

REFLECTING

- » Read James 1:19.
- » Have you noticed that we are devoting two lessons to listening? Wonder why?
- » Think about this: “We were given two ears but only one mouth. God knew that listening was twice as hard as talking.” Not only is listening difficult, but listening well is even more difficult—maybe one of the most difficult things we will ever do. But it is also one of the most important things we can do as we mature and grow.
- » The same skills we use in the real world, we carry over into the spiritual world in our

walk with God. We need to learn to set aside distractions and preconceived ideas and let God speak to us through the Bible, good books and music (and this Bible study guide), and godly people. Those same skills will be needed when we attempt to tell others about God. First we will need to listen to what they think. Then we can frame what we say to meet their needs.

- » The skill of listening well affects everyone for eternity.

Wednesday

BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Please read each text and fill in the blanks. Texts are from the New International Version of the Bible. You can go to www.BibleGateway.com if you don't have an NIV Bible.
 1. "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be _____ to _____, _____ to _____ and _____ to become _____" (James 1:19).
 2. "Sin is _____ ended by _____ words, but the _____ their _____" (Proverbs 10:19).
 3. "Set a _____ over my _____, Lord; keep _____ over the door of my _____" (Psalm 141:3).
 4. "Evildoers are _____ by their _____ talk, and so the _____ escape _____. From the _____ of their _____ people are filled with _____ things. . . . _____ show their annoyance at once, but the _____ overlook an _____."

"The _____ of the reckless pierce like _____, but the _____ of the wise brings _____. . . . The prudent keep their _____ to themselves, but a fool's _____ blurts out folly" (Proverbs 12:13, 14, 16, 18, 23).

Thursday

CONNECTING

- » Read Proverbs 12:12-23.
- » Review the memory text.
- » Ever wonder why every conversation with your parents or siblings seems to turn into an argument? It could be because you're too serious! Play a game with yourself called "what they really meant to say." Recall conversations that have gone bad over the past few days and figure out how you could have responded to make the situation better. Think about what the other person is really trying to say through not only their words but also their tone of voice and facial expressions. Here's how you play.
 - » **Example 1:** Your sister (you share a room) says to you before going to bed: "You're such a mess. You always throw your clothes on the floor and never pick them up. No one will ever want to room with you." **Playing the game, you would say:** What she really meant to say was: "When you throw your clothes on the floor after you come home from school and don't pick them up, I feel frustrated and like I'm the only one who wants to keep the room neat. When my friends come over, I feel embarrassed by how our room looks."
 - » **Example 2:** Your brother says to you: "You never pay any attention to me. You're always doing things with your friends." **Playing the game, you would say:** What he really meant to say was: "When you play with your friends, I feel left out. I feel as if

you don't like spending time with me any-
more."

Friday

APPLYING

- » Read Proverbs 10:19.
- » Refer back to Thursday's lesson to refresh your memory about playing "what they really meant to say."
- » Keep track of your attempts to listen "between the lines" and hear what your friends and/or family are really saying to you:

What _____ said: _____

What _____ really meant to say
was: _____

What _____ said: _____

What _____ really meant to say
was: _____

- » Now record how listening this way has affected your relationship with someone.

What _____ said: _____

What _____ really meant to say
was: _____

What I said to _____:

How _____ reacted: _____

