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# Words of Truth

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## Listening Long Enough To Learn

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A few months ago we did a quick overview of the book of Job here in El Paso. We were reminded of how Job went from a perfect man (Job 1:1-2:13) and turned into a foolish talker (Job 34:35, Job 35:16, and Job 38:1-2) that had to repent (Job 42:1-6). Job showed us how in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin (Proverbs 10:19). Job would have been wise to keep his mouth shut. Isn't that message clear throughout the Scriptures (Proverbs 13:3, Proverbs 17:27-28, Proverbs 18:21, Ecclesiastes 5:1-3, Ecclesiastes 10:14, Matthew 12:34-37, James 1:26, and James 3:2-18)?

After Job and his friends reached a certain point in their collective foolish talking, Elihu stepped in to correct them (Job 32:1ff). For Elihu to be able to teach Job, he had to get Job to understand it was time to listen rather than to talk. Notice what Elihu said to Job: *“Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I will speak. If thou hast any thing to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee. If not, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom. Furthermore Elihu answered and said, Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge. For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat. Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good”* (Job 33:31-34:4).

Elihu desired Job to say his peace and then shut up and listen. Elihu wanted to help Job. He wanted to teach Job wisdom. Job had spoken against God (Job 34:37). He needed to learn rather than talk. Elihu desired Job to try his [Elihu's] words and choose judgment. There is a lot of Scriptural wisdom in what Elihu tried to do as a teacher. There are two lessons to be learned from that. First, let's discuss the learning side and then we will briefly consider the teaching side of these points.

### You Have To Listen To Learn

Over the years I have been teaching I have noticed many people who instead of attentively listening (Nehemiah 8:1-3, Mark 4:24, Luke 8:18, Acts 17:10-11, I Thessalonians 2:13, and Hebrews 2:1), they are talking or thinking about what they are going to say. How can you hear and understand what is being said if you are focused on making some sort of statement? What can you learn if you only listen to part of what is said? Think about these Scriptures: *“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be **swift to hear, slow to speak,***

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*slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and **receive with meekness the engrafted word**, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he **being not a forgetful hearer**, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed”* (James 1:19-25).

Normally, when we discuss the context you just read, the focus is on being doers of the word. Like most contexts of the Scriptures, there are generally many applications to be made. Certainly, I do not want to downplay any application. Having said that, for the sake of our study here, let me emphasize that you have to HEAR instructions before you can do anything with said instructions. To hear, you have to be prepared to listen.

When our Lord addressed seven congregations in Asia, He repeated this statement to each congregation: *“He that hath an ear, let him hear...”* (Revelation 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22). When you study, are in our studies together, sit through a sermon, etc.; are you prepared to listen? Think about Martha and Mary for a moment. Jesus was in their home. Martha was focused on being hospitable. Mary wanted to listen and learn. Our Lord commended Mary (Luke 10:38-42). You have to be properly prepared to learn (Proverbs 22:17-18). Now, before I run out of space, let’s talk about our second point about teaching.

### **When You’re The Teacher**

We should all be aware of the fact that there are many people we should not be trying to teach for various reasons (Proverbs 9:6-9, Matthew 7:6, Matthew 21:23-27, I Timothy 1:3-7, II Timothy 2:23, and Titus 3:9-11). Jesus, who wants to save the lost more than any of us could imagine, walked away from whole cities (Matthew 13:53-58). He commanded His disciples to do the same (Matthew 10:5-15). When people are not willing to really listen, we CANNOT even attempt to teach them. For one, our attempt violates the commands and examples cited in this paragraph. Additionally, it would be a waste of everyone’s time. Time is something we do not have to waste (Ephesians 5:15-17, Colossians 4:5, and James 4:13-16). When you are looking to help someone be saved, try to know that they are ready to listen.

### **Conclusion**

No one can learn when they are not paying attention to the lesson being taught to them. Nor can you teach someone who is not listening. The kind of ear we need to have towards the truth is an obedient ear (Proverbs 25:12). We have to have “ears to hear” (Matthew 11:15; 13:9; 13:43, Mark 4:9; 4:23; 7:16, Luke 8:8, etc.). Do you listen long enough to learn?