

One “Quick”, Two “Slow”s

Երկու Ականջ եւ մէկ Բերան

James 1:19-27

We are studying the book of James. Last Sunday Badveli Kevin preached about trials and temptations, about the rich and the poor focusing on Jesus and not on their status. On the previous Sunday, I covered how Brother James prepared his audience regarding the trials that would come. He taught us to consider our trials pure joy. **They will become and opportunity to shape our character.** Trials are not something we look forward to; they are not things that make us happy or joyful. Yet, when they visit us, we can learn that God is with us and He teaches us to trust HIM, and that eventually becomes a joyful experience.

The process of becoming perfect, as James says, will continue until one day we receive the crown of life. Stay firm, my sister and brother, stay firm and steadfast. God is with us carrying our burden with us. **Let us stay faithful and remain in HIM.**

Having said that, I move to the next topic that is something to do **with the ears and the mouth**. We have one mouth and two ears and there is a reason God created us that way.

“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;” (James 1:19ESV)

What is the secret of **listening carefully** and **speaking wisely**? How can we learn to do this?

There is ONE “Quick” and TWO “Slows.” Do you see this?

Illustration: I was traveling on the plane one day and the passenger behind me was so loud and spoke constantly. I heard everything. We all heard everything. We learned a lot of things about this person. The mouth did not stop the whole time. I wish I had the new headphone that my children gave me that eliminates the outside noise. Have you ever been in a situation where you would say, “I wish this mouth stops talking”?

1. What does it mean to be slow to speak?

a. **Slow down** was one of the lessons I learned in SoulCare. I don't think I have mastered it, yet I have become aware of my problem. Extroverts hate to slow down. I don't need to answer all the questions; I don't need to react to every voice and word. "Slow down"... Solomon says in the wisdom literature:

Those who are sure of themselves do not talk all the time. People who stay calm have real insight. After all, even a fool may be thought wise and intelligent if he stays quiet and keeps his mouth shut. (Proverbs 17:27-28a GNB)

b. Slow to speak does not mean **being quiet and storing up your anger**. It does not mean you want people to walk all over you. **I have seen quiet people who are as harmful as people who are constantly speaking**. So it is not just saying something or not. No.

c. I believe brother James is saying, "While you are slow in speaking, **allow God to talk to you**. While you are slowing down, **allow God to appear in your relationships**. "God, I surrender to you my mouth and my words. Use my mouth as you wish and fill it with the words that please you..."

Some of us talk too much... Just imagine a **STOP sign**. This week, I would like to work on this. Slow down in your talk and do not interrupt others who are talking with you. I am not good in this. I always interrupt others. I am asking you and myself: allow others to talk and do not interrupt.

You see I think we interrupt because **we like to be in control**. **Just allow the control** to be in the hand of God and not yours. Relax, be calm... allow God to work in your life...

When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent. (Proverbs 10:19 ESV)

Don't talk so much. You keep putting your foot in your mouth. Be sensible and turn off the flow! (Proverbs 10:19 NLT)

My mom often advised me those verses.

Words and words and words...

Are you hiding behind words and words...? Ask yourself: "God, what are those words telling me? Is there something going on in my soul that needs to be healed? Am I afraid to expose my soul to you and words are just coming out covering my real problems?"

2. What does it mean to be quick to hear?

The word **quick** or swift can give us a wrong impression about the act of listening. It does not mean to listen to someone superficially.

Quick here means EAGER to listen, having the desire to understand or hear the person.

-Listening is an act of HUMILITY. Listening is SERVANTHOOD.

-It has two folds: **hearing God and hearing people around us.**

a. Counselors teach us the skill of active listening; it helps communication and the building of good relationships. If we speak less maybe we can listen more.

b. Do you listen to God? Do you hear God? James is asking his audience to be **EAGER to listen to the word of truth**, having the passion to meet God and the patience **to pay attention to God**. It means it is a priority to listen to God. To listen or to hear the word of God in OT had one meaning: **obey God's voice**. **To listen and hear is not just a cognitive exercise; it is a relationship of obedience to God our maker.**

-My example in listening carefully (to be EAGER to listen) is God himself.

Do you know our God listens?

Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear.
(Isaiah 65:24 ESV)

God hears our prayers, God listens. It does not mean He obeys us, but God is my Father, Daddy. He listens to his children communicating with HIM.

Illustration: I have witnessed this many times in my life. I have seen how God listens to me; and he answers according to His will.

c. My next example of learning how to listen is Jesus himself. He loved us; he asked questions, important questions... good listeners ask questions.

"What do you want?" "Who do the people say I am?" "Who do you say I am?" "What were you arguing about...?" he asked his disciples. "Why do you call me good?" "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" "Do you love me?" He asked Peter that question three times.

I was listening to pastor John Ortberg about this topic, and he asked: "How many questions do you think Jesus asked in the Bible? **307 questions, and he answered only 3 of them.**"

Ortberg gives two reasons:

1. Jesus asked questions all the time. Very often, he'd pose a question and then not even give people the answer. Part of what that tells us is Jesus would ask questions of tax collectors, prostitutes, fishermen, religious experts, and Gentiles because he was more interested in them than he was in himself. Life works that way in the Kingdom of God.

2. Then I think another reason Jesus would ask so many questions is he understood that a lot of times a good question can help somebody more than the right answer. Sometimes in the church, people of faith are so into wanting to **make sure we know the right answer**, we get other people to affirm the right answer. It's interesting how often Jesus just posed questions, because a lot of times people have to grow way more wrestling with the *question* than they do just hearing an *answer*.¹

Jesus is the answer to the deepest searches in our lives. He is the answer to deep theological questions. The triune God works in mysterious ways with humanity. There are many questions raised in the Bible. Teachers say the best way we learn

is asking questions. Struggling to find answers is another way to grow in faith. This is simple way to understand the triune God working with us.

3. Slow to Anger

James adds that people who speak a lot and they do not listen to God, eventually **become angry and uncontrolled.**

Paul said in Ephesians 4:26, **“in you anger do not sin”**.

However, human anger is **usually destructive because it is self-centered.**

“Anger is a means of communicating what we care about – usually ourselves. It is a chemical and psychological reaction to our displeasure that the world is not as we wish.”²

We are often angry for selfish reasons.

- Someone is driving slowly.
- You come home and there is nothing to eat. (This is me)
- You go to the movie theater and there is a long line.
- You come to the church banquet, and you are seated at a table you don't like.

James says: **for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.** ²¹ **Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.**

Can we become angry for good reason?

- God was angry when His people were in sin and committing injustice.
- Jesus was angry when the Pharisees and scribes misused God's law. Instead of worshiping God, they worshiped the “law”.
- John Stott** says, “The person who does not get angry does not care.”

See what motivates your anger?

-Conclusion:

One “Quick’ and two “Slow”s

We give an opinion about everything. I mean we give opinions more than necessary. “Church attendees” are experts in giving opinions, but when it comes to obedience to the Word... I am not sure. We need people of transformed character, and not just opinion givers. Therefore:

Be angry and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD. (Psalms 4:4-5ESV)

Complain if you must, but don't lash out.

Keep your mouth shut, and let your heart do the talking.

Build your case before God and wait for his verdict. (Psalm 4:405 MSG)

Be quick and eager to listen and obey. Take time to recline quietly in your bed (in your quiet place) to search your heart so you can hear His voice. Ask questions like: “Lord, how is my heart? How is my soul doing?” “Why I am angry?” “How can you heal my bitterness?”

1 <http://menlo.church/sermon/jim-class-cool-down-john-ortberg-june-1718/>

2 NIV commentary on Ephesians p 256.