

# Learning to Talk: “How You Ought to Answer”

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

## Introduction:

- A. Rom. 12:10-18
- B. Words leave a lasting impression, not only in their effect, but also what they reveal about the speaker
  - 1. “The less people know, the more they yell.” (Seth Godin)
  - 2. “Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.” (Mother Theresa)
- C. Communication is learned, it is hard work, and it must benefit both the speaker and the hearer
  - 1. “Communication works for those who work at it.” (John Powell)
  - 2. “Two monologues do not make a dialogue.” (Jeff Daly)
- D. Talking to others is something we assume we are good at doing. Let us be humble and consider what we can do to grow in our ability comfort, edify, and save our hearers

## I. START BY LISTENING -- REALLY LISTENING

- A. We are misguided when we think we have to say interesting things to have a good conversation.
  - 1. I made three phone calls last week to persons who wanted to talk to me about their problems and ask me for advice. In each case, I listened for about an hour to each of them as they told me about the problem, about their plans to address the problem, about what attitudes they needed to change in order to bear with it. And then at the end of an hour where I didn't say anything except “I understand” or “That's sounds difficult” or “I can see how hard you are working on this,” they all responded with “Thank you so much for the help and advice. I couldn't have done it without you!” But I didn't say anything. They just wanted someone to listen.
  - 2. The act of listening accomplishes so much:
    - a. It helps them to articulate and put into perspective the problems they are facing.
    - b. It helps them to realize that their feelings, fears, sorrows, outrage, etc. are real. It validates them as a person
    - c. It helps them to believe that they are a person worthy of love when someone takes the time to hear them through
  - 3. Sometimes the best answer is not answering at all; it is listening
    - a. When someone asks for advice, don't give it until they have fully articulated their concern.
    - b. You will be better equipped to give advice, and they might talk themselves into a solution without needing your advice
    - c. Some feel it necessary to say something in a hospital, in a funeral home, in tragic circumstances. It is not necessary to say just the right thing; being there is what really says a lot.
- B. James 1:19-20 - Swift to hear and slow to speak
  - 1. In a conversation, only one person can speak at a time - Ecc. 3:7

2. Allowing the other person to speak shows respect for him - Rom. 12:10
- C. So few people really listen. Most only hear what they want to hear.
  1. Mark 9:31-32 - The disciples didn't comprehend because it wasn't what they expected or wanted hear
  2. Some only listen as long as they like what is being said - Acts 22:21-22
  3. Some do not listen at all, but are only thinking of what they want to say and looking for a gap in the conversation to interject
  4. Some do not listen to hear what the other is truly saying, but instead hears only those things that allow a connection; fulfills a self-oriented need. "I am not listening because I care; I am listening so I can feel like we have a connection."
    - a. Talking with someone about a medical issue, only to have them interrupt and tell you about theirs
    - b. It is not about your need to connect; it is about your brother's need to be heard.

## **II. CULTIVATE THE CORRECT SPIRIT**

- A. Be cheerful
  1. Who enjoys talking to someone whose outlook on life is gloomy, negative, or paranoid? - Prov. 17:22
- B. Be encouraging - Prov. 12:25; Heb. 10:24; Eph. 4:32
- C. Be interested - Rom. 12:15; Phil. 2:3-4; Gal. 6:2

## **III. CONSIDER YOUR WORDS**

- A. Don't say everything that comes to mind - Prov. 18:7, 17:27-28
- B. Be selective with your words - Col. 4:6; Ecc. 10:12; Prov. 16:21-24; Eph. 4:29
- C. Say things that help others - Prov. 10:21, 15:7
- D. Be careful with other people's personal dignity - Prov. 17:9, 25:9

### Conclusion:

- A. Learning to speak isn't easy - James 3:2
- B. But it is worth it - Prov. 15:1, 25:11