

“Listen Up and Take Out the Trash”

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James 1:19-21 NIV

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, [20] for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. [21] Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

1. God gave us TWO ears and ONE mouth.

The first thing that stood out in this verse to me is that we should be quick to listen, and slow to speak. Does that mean we should t-a-l-k l-i-k-e t-h-i-s??? Of course not... But God gave us two ears, and only one mouth. That's so we can listen twice as much as we speak. It is important that we listen, because that is how we learn.

A good listener knows they don't have all the answers. A good listener is hungry for the truth. The "listener" knows that there is a lot to be learned and that knowing the truth is so important that they just have got to get it.

Proverbs 4:5-7 NIV

Get wisdom, get understanding;

do not forget my words or swerve from them.

[6] Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.

[7] Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom.

Though it cost all you have, get understanding.

To "GET WISDOM and UNDERSTANDING" we need to be listeners. We should be looking for every opportunity to grow in

our understanding of the truth (especially understanding spiritual things).

Some opportunities you have to listen to the truth:

-Youth Service: you're here and that's good... it gives you a chance to learn more about God. You are doing the right thing!!!

-Sunday School: Ms. Mary is teaching 6-8th graders, and I'm teaching the High School class. Our class is going into a less formal time, where you can ask questions about life and God, and we'll come back right then or the following week with some kind of answer. 9 am Sundays is a great chance for you to hear about God.

-Sunday Services: what a great chance for you to hear about God. Pastor George is so full of wisdom about God's word. Don't miss your chances to learn about God.

Remember God gave us TWO ears and ONE mouth. We should listen more, and talk less sometimes. I believe that each one of us here can be a good listener. As we listen and learn... we'll grow.

2. Don't Get Ticked Quick (vs. 19 ...slow to become angry)

This verse doesn't say that we should never be angry, but that we should be slow to anger. We shouldn't let stuff get to us. James is telling us, "KEEP YOUR COOL!!!" People do stuff to set us off, to push our buttons... but you don't have to let your buttons be pushed.

Illustrations:

WHAT NOT TO DO!!!

I was about 11 years old and my brother was 9. He was bugging me... I mean really getting under my skin. I don't remember what he said or did, but I SNAPPED and started bashing his head into the window of the parked car in our driveway. For a few seconds my anger got the best of me and I hurt my own little brother.

He really started crying and I realized I was hurting him and stopped. It's a good thing I didn't really do him damage. That whole thing never would have happened at all if I would have controlled my anger.

WHAT TO DO.

I was in high-school, walking through the crowded hallway. Lockers on both sides of the hall, with people stopped at them, and I was on my way out of there. The bell had rung... another school day was over, and I was not hanging around. As I was walking I was bumped by some people going by me and I stumbled into this Asian kid who was bigger than me and apparently already having a bad day. As soon as I bumped him he turned around and smacked my open hand across the face. IT STUNG!!! When I got my balance and looked at him I knew he was ticked, and I was pretty ticked myself. The dude just smacked me in the face... and it hurt (but I didn't show it). But I kept my cool. I didn't want a fight. I knew it wasn't the right thing to do... so I said, "Dude it was an accident, I don't want to fight." And I walked away. He never said a word. He just stood there looking dumb.

I got mad, but I didn't act on it. I could have said something stupid, or hit him and started a big fight... but that wouldn't have fixed anything. We both would have been suspended from school, maybe even expelled, not to mention whatever injuries we would have given each other.

The Point:

In the incident with my brother I got ticked and went over the edge... I did wrong and hurt my own brother. With the big Asian kid I was mad, but I kept my cool and did the right thing. **Feeling angry isn't wrong, but if you act on that anger you often make the wrong choice.**

Ephesians 4:26-27 NASB

Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, [27] and do not give the devil an opportunity.

Every single one of us will feel angry sometimes, but we have to control our anger, and make Godly choices.

3. Take Out the Trash (vs. 21 ...get rid of all moral filth)

ASK: What is "moral filth"???

Moral filth is sin. Basically it's the trash in our lives. God wants us to check ourselves. We should take a good look and see if there is sin in our lives. If we ask God to show us stuff in our lives that shouldn't be there, He will. As we live a life of "listening" to God, He will point out things in us that need to change.

Maybe you have a moral issue (some trash in your life) that needs to be dealt with.

Maybe it's your speech. What do you say when you are around other teens at school that don't believe in God???. Some people talk about trash. They let that garbage flow out of their mouths, and they don't know God, so they don't know any better. But you know God. Is God pleased with the words you speak???

Maybe the moral filth in your life is something you look at or listen to. What do you watch on TV???. Would you watch it, if Jesus were in the room with you? He is you know. Or maybe you surf the internet and end up on web-sights filled with garbage. Be warned... what you see and what you hear affect who you are. Be careful what music you choose... it affects you. Be careful what you let into your life, and who you hang out with the most ... they affect you.

Reflection:

Bow heads, close eyes. Pray this prayer after me, and then we are going to give God a little time to speak to us.

Pray: God show me if there is any trash in my life. Show me if there is something I am doing or saying that isn't pleasing to you. Search my life, and point out any sinful ways in me.

Wait a few moments... then say open your eyes:

Take a few moments to write those things God showed you on your card. When you are done fold your card over... and shut your eyes again.

Pray:

God I give my trash to you. I ask you to help me live for you. Help me to get rid of moral trash and pursue righteousness. AMEN.

Come bring your cards and throw them into the trash can.