

Listen Up

Have you ever felt like you're talking to a brick wall? If you're a parent, you can probably relate. Giving our little ones instruction and guidance, sometimes it feels like no one's listening. In Isaiah, God expressed the same frustrated feelings with His children too.

"... 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed" (Isa. 6:9-10).

So, let's turn to consider ourselves. How's your listening? Since God speaks to us today through His word, how can we get better at listening to Him (and others), even when we might want to ignore the message?

Love the Truth

Sometimes life is messy! There isn't always an easy or obvious solution to every problem. So coming to the correct conclusion or making the best decision takes effort — it takes a deep love for the truth.

Jesus liked to speak in parables, presenting the truth in a way that required work to understand (Matt. 13:10-17). He wants us to dig for it, prayerfully asking for guidance, and not stopping until we find it. After all, it's the truth that sets us free (John 8:31-32)! If the truth is what we love, we'll continuously be *in* the word, checking what we hear, and holding on to those things which we confirm to be true (Acts 17:11).

So, do you love the truth enough to search for it? Will you refuse to be satisfied with misinformation, speculation, or rumor?

Get Comfortable With Discomfort

We naturally tend to gravitate towards comfortable conclusions. Once we find some facts which make us feel good, validate our existing beliefs, or which prove the point we wanted to make, it's easy to stop there and avoid digging deeper. But the truth isn't always comfortable!

We can become so resistant to change, that we'll heap up for ourselves words which tickle our ears and make us feel good (2 Tim. 4:3-4). But let's get comfortable with being uncomfortable! Let's learn to listen, even when it reveals our faults or failures. Like Apollos, who needed correction about his teachings on baptism (Acts 18:25-26), we should welcome the help and wisdom of those courageous enough to teach us as Priscilla and Aquila did.

So, how do you feel when someone questions what you believe to be true? Do you put up a wall and refuse to listen? Or do you settle into the awkwardness and listen to what might be valuable and helpful instruction?

Realize We're Often Wrong

We can convince ourselves of almost anything, it seems. As a younger man, I was confident that I understood more than my parents — until I realized how little I *actually* knew. But just because we tell ourselves we're "right," or we have "all" the answers doesn't make it accurate!

If we're honest with ourselves, we realize that we're incapable of directing our steps (Jer. 10:23). We've all sinned (Rom. 3:23). Not one of us is worthy to "cast the first stone" (John 8:1-11). And based on our terrible track record of being wrong, it shouldn't surprise us that there's more for us to learn! And before you get too hard on yourself, remember that you're in good company, since Jesus' closest friends were often wrong also. As His disciples, we're students and learners — continually open and receptive to the Lord's teachings as we move past our failures toward success. *So, think back to a time where you were wrong about something. Rather than feeling like you have everything figured out, could you still have more to learn today?*

May God soften our hearts to be receptive to His word today. Let's listen with love for the truth, finding comfort with uncomfortable change, and learning to humble ourselves before the Lord as we live each day in His service.