

Guarding the Doors #6

Monday- "HUMBLE LISTENERS"

READ: John 4:1-42

This week is all about communication. I don't know about you but this is not something that comes easy to any of us. I went to www.ask.com this week the question, "What is communication?" Here's what it told me: "Communication is the transmission of information". Communication involves both listening and speaking. I won't be ashamed to admit that one comes a lot easier than the other. Can you guess which one? Anybody can open their mouth and say whatever comes to their mind, but it takes a different kind of person to listen. Listening involves humility. You have to be humble enough to listen to what others are saying. Listening never gets recognized either. You always hear a round of applause after a speech, but you will never hear a round of applause for those listening. Listening is just one of those humble attributes that is so rare. When was the last time you listened to someone? I mean really listen to what they are saying? Do your eyes wander? Does your body language tell them they are important to you? Do you ask follow up questions to make sure you understand them? Wouldn't the world be a better place if there were fewer talkers and more listeners? This week why don't we try to stop adding to the noise, and instead be humble listeners. A lot of times what people really need is not to be spoken to, but heard. Will you today when you feel that urge to do all the talking, and take control of the conversation retreat to the humble side of communication and be the listener? Jesus was great at this. Can you imagine the amount of times He listened to people go off on how much they knew about whatever it was they were talking about. Little did they know they were talking to God in the flesh who knows all things. Jesus had a humble way about Him where He would listen first, then speak. Look at the way He does this with the women at the well in John 4. Do you see His humility in His interaction with her? Let's go and do likewise. The world doesn't need more know it alls. What it does need are more humble listeners.

Tuesday- "AT HOME"

READ: Eph. 6:1-4

One thing we often forget is that Jesus had an earthly childhood just like any kid in His day. Because the Bible doesn't talk a lot about His early years we tend to forget that. Jesus would have had to learn submission to authority. He would have had to learn to eat His words at times. He would have had to bite His tongue often. He would have seen His parents make mistakes and wondered whether He should capitalize on them or not. Jesus serves as an example of having bridled power. All of us, whether we are parents or kids, have power through our words that can either build up or destroy. Paul in Ephesians gives advice for families that still works today. When kids honor their parents, trusting their will is for the child's best, and when parents honor their kids by putting their kids before themselves, the system is beautiful. It's when the ugly enemy called

pride steps in that it destroys what was intended for our good. Obedience, submission and surrender are not enemies in the home. They are what hold the home together. I can remember growing up thinking I knew more than my parents only to find out I was wrong more than they were. Reflect on the life of Christ and His wonderful way of honoring His own father. How many times in the New Testament does Jesus mention the Father's will? The answer.... a lot. Jesus constantly had the interest of His Heavenly Father before Himself. What a great lesson for every parent and every kid. The best way to have a happy home is for everyone to honor each other and submit to each other in humility. It's very hard to split a home where everyone has the other person's best interest in mind. God the Son and God the Father serve as our perfect example of healthy submission. May our homes reflect the same.

Wednesday- "MR. ANSWER MAN"

READ: Proverbs 18:13

What does a fool look like? The picture of the fool is found in Proverbs 18:13. Who do you think the writer was referring to? Do you think it was his wife? Maybe it was his experience with his boss at work? Maybe he was referring to his own kids? We will never know who he was referring to, but one thing is for sure, we can all identify with those who prefer to speak before they have heard. There is nothing more frustrating than trying to communicate something and constantly getting cut off by what the other person is trying to say. It sometimes feels like a competition. The worst is when you feel like you have to talk fast in order to get what you want to say in there before the other person cuts you off. I don't know about you but after experiencing these types of people in my life I sure as heck don't want to become one of them. The Bible uses some pretty harsh language to describe these people. I think one of the reasons why is because deep down beneath the issue is pride. It's an attitude that says, "What I have to say is more important than you!" "What I am about to say is far better than what you are saying". Nobody likes Mr. Answer Man who parades himself around with always having an answer for everything, even the things he knows nothing about. This week please do yourself, your family and the planet a favor and don't be that guy or that girl. 'Cause if you come around me I might have to quote to you Proverbs 18:13 and call you what you are.... a fool.

Thursday- "IDENTIFY"

READ: Romans 12:15-16

I love this passage. One thing I love more than this passage is those who live it out. Have you ever been around someone who feels your pain when you are having a bum day, or expresses excitement when you succeed? There is nothing like it in the whole world. In my life I have found the best friends to have are those that not only can laugh with you but know how to cry with you as well. In this life there is a season for both

mourning and rejoicing. The key to being a good friend is to do them both at the appropriate times. Jesus was a great friend to His disciples. I'm sure there were times when they were out fishing that they were telling jokes and having a great old time, but Scripture also tells us that there were times when "Jesus wept" (John 11:35) and mourned with those who were mourning. Jesus was the master at being able to identify with where people were at. If we are going to model Jesus well and be truly Christian we need to learn what it looks like to identify with people. The best way to do this is to go through one of the Gospels and watch the life of Jesus. To the broken He expresses sympathy, the proud He rebukes, to the contrite He forgives, to the sick He heals. Today is a wonderful opportunity from the Lord to identify with someone no matter where they are at.

Friday- "LOVE TRUSTS"

READ: 1 Cor. 13:1-7

I was meeting with Pastor Phil not too long ago when he informed me that the "LOVE PASSAGE" in 1 Corinthians 13 has this little phrase in there that says, "Love Trusts". He went on to tell me that in the Greek that phrase basically means that love thinks the best of the other person. It gives them the benefit of the doubt. This made me start to think about my own life. When I say "I love you" to people, do I really mean it. Do I always error on the side of giving people the benefit of the doubt or do I pre-determine in my mind that they are going to fail me? If we are going to be good at communication we have to learn to trust people and think the best of them. Are you always doubting and looking at the negatives of people or are you giving them the benefit of the doubt? If you choose to do that latter, you are really choosing to love!

Saturday- "BLAH, BLAH, BLAH"

READ: 1 Cor. 13:1

This is exactly what I hear when someone is speaking to me that I know could care less about me. The phrase is true, "People don't care how much you know until you know how much they care". Paul, again, reminds us that all we are is a resounding gong in the realm of communication if we have not love. There are a lot of gongs clanging in the world with little recognition that this is what they are. You may be one too! Here's how you know if you are a gong. When people are talking to you do you actually care about who they are? Is who they are more important to you than what they say? Do you look to see who they are underneath the surface of what they are saying? Does your body language portray that you are listening intently to them? Do your eyes wander when someone else is speaking to you? Do you ask follow up questions? A week later do you ask them how those test results turned out, if they got the job, etc? Do you pray for

them? Answering yes to these questions is a great indicator that you are not a con, and that you truly have love for people. Answering no to these questions.... well to you I say "blah, blah, blah". Because I'm not listening! I don't care how much you know, until I know how much you care.