

## The Powers of Friendship (continued)

*An extensive study was made on people in various occupations to determine which group was most effective as counselors. A survey included professional counselors as well as people who wouldn't regard themselves as counselors. The most effective? Hair dressers!*

*A woman enters a hair salon and is seated in the chair. The hairdresser asks, "Well, how have you been?" And – off they go. The client gets a hairstyle and emotional lift.*

*As a result of the survey, someone decided to train hairdressers in counseling. Subsequent study revealed that those who took the training lost their effectiveness!*  
(Taken from a Navigator Newsletter)

This illustration may exaggerate the effectiveness of hairdressers as counselors. But there is something to be said about those who care enough to listen to us. We are often able get a tangible grip on our personal frustrations by talking to a good listener who nods and inserts a few questions to keep the conversation going.

Last month I wrote about *The Power of Presence* as a foundation to friendships. Just as significant is *The Power of Listening*.

### The Value of Listening

The importance of the listener is underestimated in our information-ridden era. People with a "quick lip" get noticed. Those with "dynamic communication skills" are rewarded more often than those with keen listening skills. How many of us pastors had a class in Bible college or seminary on *Listening*? But why talk if no one is listening?

Many talk shows should receive Emmy Awards for the grossest examples of communication abuse. A panel of people talking obsessively without pause all at the same time is not communication. Who speaks the truth or has the best solution is lost in a hail storm of rude verbosity. It is all about verbal dominance. In contrast, God values listening skills:

*My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,<sup>20</sup> for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.*  
(James 1:19-20)<sup>1</sup>

James 1:19-21 links much speech with anger, implying that being slow to speak will delay expressing inappropriate anger. In other words, don't be quick to judge; that's God's job. Just concentrate on listening and inserting words selectively. Much damage is avoided by quickly engaging the ears before "quick tongues" are unleashed. James elaborates later on the need for tongue management (James 3:1-13). A word study on "the tongue" in Proverbs

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, scripture quotes are from the New International Version of the Bible.

will also serve as a stern reminder regarding the misuse of this powerful member of the body.

## **The Value of God Listening**

Scripture communicates that God is not too busy talking to listen to His people. God has pretty much said what needed to be said in the 66 books of the Bible. Now, as always, His ears are wide open to our cries, shouts and whispers.

*Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me; he has listened to my plea and given me a son." Because of this she named him Dan. (Genesis 30:6)*

*The LORD listened to Israel's plea and gave the Canaanites over to them. They completely destroyed them and their towns; so the place was named Hormah. (Numbers 21:3)*

*Now I had stayed on the mountain forty days and nights, as I did the first time, and the LORD listened to me at this time also. It was not his will to destroy you. (Deuteronomy 10:10)*

*The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. (Psalm 34:17)*

*Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice. (Psalm 55:17)*

*The LORD hears the needy and does not despise his captive people. (Psalm 69:33)*

## **The Value of Our Listening**

Listening can be the best therapy for wounded lives. Whenever I hear someone begin to describe a path of pain that I have not traveled, I am at a loss on what to say. I experience a *thickness* of the tongue. Others call it being "tongue-tied" over what to say to those who need to be comforted. Actually, being tongue-tied may be a good place to begin as a comforter and friend. It is far better to err on the side of silence in such situations than to fill the air with unnecessary chatter. People don't often remember words in their state of suffering, but they seldom forget those who show up to listen.

*"He who has a good friend, needs no mirror."  
(Old Indian Proverb)*

Eternal Friends in Christ,  
Jim Anderson, Director of Pastoral Care