

Study	Counselling Series Talk 1
Topic	Are You "Listening?"
Reference	James 1
Date	16 October 2019
Speaker	Arnold Lim

I want to just show you a bit of a poll. Let me just show you where we are and I want to show you the results.

How do you rate your listening skills?

3.4. We had a polling of 200 people done, so this is fairly comprehensive. Our church was 600 people. We have 200, that makes it about 72/100, so there is a score about B. So how do you rate yourself as a listener, 72/100.

How do you rate FBC as a listening church?

Is 3.1. That is 62/100. That is a C. That has drastically shifted the demographics. In simple English, the diagnoses on FBC as a listening church is above average.

How do you rate FBC leaders listening skill?

We all leaders are at 64/100. That's an indictment on us again.

How do you rate FBC as a listening church to those who are hurting?
62/100.

Now why I am telling you this. It means that there is actually a lot to be done. The most we are is we are above average and I think it shows a bit of the piles of the church. So tonight we are going to really look at this and let God ask us how we can at least go from a C to a B, not asking too much. We don't need to be A but at least we should be a B. Last slide we did.

Do you think God listens to you?

So actually, we didn't phrase this question very accurately. We are going to rephrase it now and we want you to take out your headphones and we are going to do another polling.

What do you think God feels when he listens to our prayers?

It looks like majority of you feel that God listens to your prayers. Well, it is quite high, you know. That means you are saying there is a B score. That means most of you are of the view that when you give a prayer. Now we understand God listens to your prayers, whether they are good or bad, God listens to your prayers but you are all of the view that God is pleased with your prayers. Now let me read this to you and it just comes from James chapter 1. It is about asking and God listening.

James 1:5-8

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

That means chapter 1 verses 5 to 7 shows you God is not pleased with some prayers. That's one. Now James reinforces this in chapter 4. He says

2You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. 3When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

There is an indictment in the Book of James. That means as far as James is concerned, quite a significant number of Christians, their prayers God is not pleased with but when you look at the poll most of you think that God is pleased with you. On the other hand, when we ask is people listen to you, you give a C score. So, there is a dichotomy between what you feel about yourself and God and what you feel about other people. So today, we want to really go into that and we are going to go to the slide now. Now I want to just give you little bit on the Book of James. We are going to take a very famous verse on the Book of James, but let me ask a question, if you have the Book of James in front of you and this is side point which is very interesting, how many times is Jesus mentioned in the Book of James. If you had the Bible in front of you, you can just do a scroll of 5 chapters. It is an interesting point which Martin Luther picks up.

In fact Jesus is only mentioned twice. He is mentioned in chapter 1 verse 1,

*1James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
Chapter 2:1My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ..*

Outside of that Jesus is not mentioned and the gospel is not mentioned. Now that's quite interesting in what we call gospel centred preaching because it is very gospel centre but Christ is not mentioned. I want to just give you a bit of context of James because this is very often miss when we look at the Book of James.

James was written very likely to a Jewish audience, most scholars believe that and it was probably after Steven was martyred in the Book of Acts. After Steven was martyred, the Jews are scattered. How do we know that? Look at the beginning of the chapter.

1James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations:

That's your context. The context is people who are scattered and what are they facing. You find it in verse 2,

2Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, a whenever you face trials of many kinds,

So these are the scattered people who are facing trials and you find latest temptations and James is a strange book. In these short 5 chapters he has got 60 exhortations. It is like the Sermon of the Mount. So people tend to read it in isolation because he is saying so many things, like everywhere. So what people don't take up is the main theme of Book of James and that is very critical to the context of what we are going to speak on. Is a secular letter and it is about believers who don't have deeds. They call themselves Christians but their behaviour doesn't show it. So this is something we all struggle with.

Best speech given by a father of the groom on wedding day. This is what David Lim's father said to him when he got married. He said

"David, I have only ONE advice...when your wife wants to talk, just shut up and listen. Which is why I will now let your mother continue the speech."

Some context, just give you little thing. In 1-Samuel chapter 8, they asked through the prophet Samuel they asked for a king. Samuel pleaded with them, no, don't, God is your king.

*¹⁹But the people **refused to listen to Samuel**. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. ²⁰Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."*

Today we are going to look at root and fruit. Fruit is what's the problem, we want a king, it is not a sinful desire. That's fruit, but there is a root and the issue here is this is why they don't listen to Samuel and this is why a lot of us have a problem with listening and we don't recognise it. We cannot see the behaviour and what is underlying it. So to them, it is a very simple request, we want a king. But the real root is this, then we will be like all the other nations. That is the issue, because Israel is not meant to be like all the other nations. They are to be unlike the other nations, they are to be a royal priesthood, they are to be set apart, so there is an issue here. The issue is not them wanting a king, they are basically rejecting God as king in their lives. So I want you to pick that picture because when we look at hearing, which is the foundational issue I think of a lot of problems in this church and a lot of problems at home. I would tell you that it begins with this, it has got to do with we wanting to be kings in our lives. I want us to take note of that.

I humbly suggest to you that a lot of our personal problems in our marriages, personal problems with our children, personal problems in church begin with this and we only see the fruit, we don't see the root. So I want us to go through that now. There is this very famous verse in James which is quoted so often which we found in verse 19

Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger

Everyone knows this verse, the common interpretation and I am not saying is wrong, but I want you to look a bit deeper, it is simply this. When someone talks to you, you should listen attentively, listen quickly and then process it, don't be reactive and then speak slowly after you consider and then if they say things that you don't agree you don't react. There is nothing wrong with that, my question to you is that what the text is saying. Because he is a saying by Victor Franko, a famous philosopher

Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

Self health management books all quote this and if you are not careful we will look at this famous text about listening in that same line. It is a self empowerment issue. What's the problem about listening it, to interpreting this verse in that way, very simple. You don't need to be a Christian. I don't need to be a Christian to appreciate quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger. It is common sense. That is the problem with this interpretation. It takes God out of the picture. It is a self help interpretation. So I want us to go through the text and look carefully what exactly is James saying, I gave you the context. The context is a people who are going through trials and temptations. That is

the context. James writes letter to pull them back that is the intention. Now lets look at the context of it.

James 1:19-27

¹⁹My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹Therefore, 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. ²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. ²⁶Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Firstly, lets look at what is the key theme here. The key theme here is the sin of speaking wrongly and that is actually found throughout the Book of James. Let's look at it;

Verse 19, everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry

26 Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues

So you know the two verses are connected, is about speech and he brings this up again in chapter 3, taming the tongue, chapter 3:1-12. He brings it up again in chapter 4:11. He brings it up again in verse 15. The sin of the tongue is the issue. So here is a simple thing, before we go about what we say we start off with what we listen that is your fundamental. You sort that out you will solve a lot of your problems in life. It is like this, what you listen, what you say, what you do. So James goes with the root. The root is what you listen. Your problem is what you listen and you process that wrongly, what you say goes wrong. What you say goes wrong, what you do goes wrong too. It is simple wisdom. Now here is the key part which you have got to ask yourself. The question is who is he referring to when he says, everyone should be quick to listen, quick to listen to who and what. Now look at verse 21, he says, therefore. Meaning, it is connected.

Therefore get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you.

What's that got to do with being quick to listen. You see the context is important and the context if you have your Bible, it comes before that. Before that he uses the same word in verse 18, he choose to give birth through the word of truth. So there is the word again. Then verse 22,

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

So what I suggest here is the context. The context when everyone should be quick to listen, he is not referring to listen to another person. He is referring to listening to the word of God. That is where a lot of sermons online go off you know, it is contextually out. That's why it makes sense, is verse 21,

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.

You accept the word and that's why you must listen to the word and then he reinforces it in 22,

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

You see where it goes; listening, hearing, speaking and doing. Take your time to listen and learn, and then be slow to speak and then slow to anger. So the context is this. Before we talk about listening to others, the question you and I have to ask ourselves is simply this, are you listening to God and the polling score is very telling you know. You all think you listen to God but you all think people don't listen to you, have you noticed that. It is a 78 score on listening to God, God is pleased with me. It is a 62 score on church leaders listening to you. Have you noticed that? There is a dichotomy. This is what the text is saying. You misunderstand very likely you and I are not listening to God and that is why we find people not listening to us. That is what James is saying. Now why do we need to listen to ourselves. He gives you the reason.

²³ *Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like **someone who looks at his face in a mirror***

It is a fantastic illustration. It is called the man in the mirror illustration

²⁴ *and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.*

You see what the word does to you, it reveals your sinfulness and what James is saying with regards to your speech and your hearing, he wants you to look intently and realise these are my faults in listening to others. These are my faults in listening to God and if I keep looking at it, I would then take step to do something about it. That's why it says, do what it says, other than it you forget. So here is the first diagnostic. The first diagnostic is, you need to find out what are your flaws in listening to others. That's the first thing. Then the second part is this. He then goes to what real religion is

²⁶ *Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.*

You can be involved with any ministry, you can do a lot of things, if you got loose mouth that's it and sometimes it is very tragic. I struggle with this, I am not a moral good example, but sometimes you find some people they come up to you, you didn't ask for the opinion, open their mouth, they will just rant at someone else in church. This verse is saying this. You could be a ministry leader but you don't keep a tight rein on your tongues you deceive yourself. That is what he is saying. Then he gives you the context of that religion. The context of religion,

²⁷ *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans...*

Why that because the tribes are scattered, people are going into trails. It is basically an example of people who are suffering. Widows suffer because widows are scattered and they are going through trails and he gives you another reason

to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Do not let what we feel about the world come into the way we think. So let me give you three propositions on listening and we are doing in what we call an integration approach to this, meaning we are taking scripture, we are taking what research is showing about listening and we are integrating

it. You will find this actually in a lot of secular research. They will tell you listening comes in a levelling. There are three levels, macro to micro. I want to give you the biblical proposition. The first proposition is this.

Level 1 is called internal listening. You listen to not your voice and secular world will tell you to listen to your voice, but no we listen to what God is telling us about ourselves. That is level 1 and this is where we fail. This is why you and I have problems with our wives and husbands and we can be very active in church and we can know our Bible but this is your fundamental problem and this is why people in church fight and this in why in church we have abuse cases and no one talks about it. Sitting here, there are people who are having that, they beat their husbands, beat their wives, beat their children, they will not talk about it because this is the fundamental problem. I don't know how to stress this, we all have this issue. So he tells you this and uses the man in the mirror because people tell you, you have got a problem, afterwards forget already. Why do you forget, because you repeat the same thing and so Jesus is pulling you back to the mirror. I want you to not walk away from mirror, this is who you are until he breaks you. That's level 1. You don't audit yourself, you are not in a position to help people. This is very damaging but very critical and I want us to really pick this in.

Level 2 is focused listening. We call this empathetic or listen with empathy. Meaning you go to a person where his pain is and not expect him to come to you. Listen intently, you go to the widow and you listen to the widow, because you understand now the pain of the widow and that's why James ends the last part of the book of what, he says it in prayer. He says

¹⁶Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. James 5:16

Do you think you will confess your sins to another person in church, most of us will won't. You know why? You think the other guy doesn't listen to you and if he listens to you he is going to judge you because we do not listen with empathy. That's the second layer.

The third layer is gospel perspective listening or basically people call it perspectival listening. Again you will find this in secular teachings. You listen in the context and listening to others in the context of what God commands through scripture and what is the context here, he gives it to you, the context is actually; to keep yourself from being polluted by the world but the larger context is you are a chosen people, you have to behave like that, you have to glorify God through your listening.

Let me give you what LEVEL 1 does. You have to ask God, try imagine yourself as a man in mirror. That means you go back and you stare in the mirror or you go back and pray and you ask God this, what is your sinful tendency. We all have it. Now research will tell you, everyone in this room is in three categories and I will show you this. The first is we call this, people who like to give advice. So if I tell you I got a problem, I say my office recession, I am struggling to keep afloat then you just say, retrench people man, it is instinctive because your heart is wired that way. My kid spends too much time on the computer, the solution is to switch off the computer. Now where is that coming from? Likely the root of it, because your background or your work drives that. If you are from a management position of work, you are use to telling people what to do, so you go home and you do the same thing. You see where we are going with this. There is a root to this.

The second is information gathering. One is you like to dig. Some of us have this issue, we just want to find out and then we like to give all sorts of stories and there is a reason for that. The research will tell you, a lot of this is because it is an evasive thing.

The third one is critical. The next poll we are going to do for FBC is we are going to ask everybody is FBC a critical church. What I am trying to say is this. It is very easy to point but we point back at ourselves, let's have some humility and I want to suggest all of us are in this category. If you don't do that, you are self deluded, because the research all shows you this and we are going to do an exercise later to figure out which category you go in. The way you respond you will find out who you are. So that is something for you to look at.

This is basically something developed by Redeemer Church. They uses basically a cycle of knowing yourself. Let me just quickly do to you. Your past pushes this. If you had a very bad childhood, something happened, you had a trauma, a suicide, beating, something really bad, it affects what you listen because certain things become a trigger mechanism. You don't want someone to tell you certain things, because it affects you, you don't want to know and you will interpret the past to yourself. Now what we are looking at today is the reactive emotion site, they call these are your trigger. The next talk we do, we will go and look at basic emotions, but we start off by hearing. Because hearing is how you interpret the world around you and interpret yourself and you sometimes cannot hear God whispering to you. So this is the one I taught just now.

What doesn't no one tells about their sins, because if I come and tell you, I have this struggle, I have this addiction. The other guy say, oh really, you are church leader some more. Does Peter know? You are not KPC, you like to give advice, you don't give advice, you criticize, you follow where we go with that. Now that is the root. Now what we are going to look at is we are going to look at the fruit. There is a fruit to it. So I am going to give you some sampling of the fruit that people all have and it comes in this line, they key verse which is what James is saying. Number one, are you slow to listen because you have short attention span. This is my sin. So some of us have this. This is fruit. It comes from lot of reasons. A) you are stress, B) got too many things. But that's one, this is the fruit.

Just now at Level 1 we looked at root, now we look at fruit. Here is another one, you really don't care. Here is another one, you cannot pick up nonverbal queues. Now here is the classic, you are in a small group, your live group, nonverbal Qs means you listen to things that are not spoken but it doesn't even have to be just body language, it certain things people do that suddenly shows there is a shift in their normal behavior. So they are always in a certain behavior. Suddenly on that day, their behavior is different or they are always saying certain things, suddenly on that night they say something which is not normal. Now you could respond in a whole many ways. You could say, please don't disturb the Bible study. The fellow is never going to come back. So have to pick up nonverbal tune and there is a classic story in Elijah on this and we are going to do that as a case study where God picks up the nonverbal Qs on Elijah.

Now this is my problem also, you think you know the issue. A lot of people listen simply because they want to talk and my problem is, you ask, number one thing about Arnold's problem he will always interrupt you. That's why people always talk to me, Arnold let me finish. Let me tell you where that come from, from myself it comes from a self-righteousness. That's why I got a wife, because the wife never fails to remind you, you don't be so self-righteousness Arnold Lim. She is right. There is a lot of humility to accept that. People who know their Bible very well, people who are very successful in life, people who have done very well all have this issue, without fail. Is either Bible knowledge or you made millions of dollars with very young or you did, you have that problem. So this is fruit and lastly is trigger. You have an addition, no body knows. The conversation moves to that, the trigger factor. So you try to pull that discussion away.

Classic case of this is a Samaritan woman because Jesus boxes her in, you've got five husbands. Very smart now, wow you are a prophet, let's talk about the theology of worship. She shifts the conversation because she is not comfortable. This scripture is beautiful because a lot of this is found. So we all, every one of us have some of these symptoms. And I suggest tonight what we want to do is pull this out so that we become better listeners. They are all very uncomfortable things to do but before you disciple other people we all must have the humility to disciple ourselves. Either that when you talk to other people this is the third problem. It is actually self-actualization. I give you a simple example.

This issue isn't prolife or prochoice, the issue is if your prolife and you look at some of the prochoice and you get very upset is, have you put yourself in the shoes of a woman who got raped and had a child she didn't want. That's the point. Have you gone to her to say, yes we are on the opposite side of camp but you got raped, you got a child you want to abort, I may not agree with it but I feel you. Here is another one, you certainly discover your daughter or son is gay. What do you do? You know what most Christians will do? You are on the road to hell, you are damn, I know this because I speak with some people who are like that. How many of us will actually sit down and say, why are you like that. Have you considered some people become gay because they were bullied in school, because they had bad relationship with man who abused them, so they went the other side, but Christians don't even bother to ask. They throw the book at you, you are a sinner.

This is our problem. We lack empathy. We lack that ability to go in out. There are three layers of empathy and now we are going to go into integration theory and this is taken from one of the most well know writers on listening, heavily researched.

People tune out the speaker; they're either daydreaming, forming rebuttals, faking attention or are more interested in talking than listening. Once someone is finding fault, being judgmental or closed off, breakdowns in relationships and poor decision-making occur and the speaker or listener is more likely to move into the flight-or-fight mode.

Adapted from Madelyn Burnley Allen, Listening: The Forgotten Skill

This is called Level 3. Can I suggest to you in all humility, a lot of people in FBC have this issue including myself. Here is level 2

Listeners mainly listen to words and the content of what is being said, but they fail to understand the speaker. They forget that words don't communicate; it's the meaning and the understanding of words that creates effective communication. For example, Level 2 listeners zero in on words, but many times, they miss the intent because they neglect to pay attention to what is being expressed nonverbally through tone of voice, body posture, gestures, facial expression and eye movement. As a result, Level 2 listeners hear what the speaker says but make little effort to understand the speaker's intent. Obviously, this may lead to misunderstanding, incorrect actions, loss of time and a variety of negative feelings. In addition, because the listener appears to be listening by nodding his head in agreement and not asking clarifying questions, the speaker may be lulled into a false sense of being listened to and understood.

I want to tell you, this happens most in marriages. I know this because my wife always say, I don't listen to her and she is right in humility. A lot of these symptoms I have. Now this is what we want to move at if you do the exercise on this later.

Listeners look for an area of interest in the speaker's message; they view it as an opportunity to gather new and useful information. They're also aware of their personal biases and attitudes

This is what you need to do. They are aware of the biases and attitudes and I suggest humbly most of us don't. If we are humble enough, we all don't have this. We go in barging and we shoot from the head and we forget that God is saying look in the mirror and that's why people fight.

and are better able to avoid making automatic judgments

people are church are not reflective, they are reactive.

about the speaker and avoid being influenced by emotionally charged words. They strive to see things from another's point of view and avoid advocating a position. This listening behavior allows them to tap into their higher creative intelligence. Level 1 listeners also try to anticipate the speaker's next statement, to mentally summarize the stated message, question or evaluate what was said and to consciously notice nonverbal cues. Their overall focus is to listen with understanding and respect.

Level 3 listening. Here are few things which I think we need to look at:

1. Are you listening because comforting others is your identity or your idol. You are listening because you want everyone to know you are caring. It is an idol you know. It is not a gospel purpose. It gives you meaning.
2. You are not listening in humility
3. You are listening to empower the person to depend on God or to yourself and this where we are trying to shift it to God. Now you are listening with gospel purpose and priority.

We are going to quick case study.

1 Kings 19 (NIV)

19 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ²So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."

Now the context of 1 Kings 18 here is like superman. He had just whacked the prophets of Baal, called in lightning from heaven. Here is the man, boom, everybody gets whacked. So he goes back to town and everything feel the same. All the prophets of Baal are still there and Jezebel wants him, I am going to kill you and suddenly this superhero runs for his life

³*Elijah was afraid^[a] and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there,*

That is interesting word, because prophets don't have much things. When a prophets leaves his servant there, he is leaving everything.

⁴ while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die.

He is suicidal.

"I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."

He is depressed. He has got depression.

⁵ Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.

Now he spoke to God and God listened. Now I want you to hear what did God hear. Why didn't God lecture him, God didn't lecture him, God didn't say let me give you some theology. God sent an angel

All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." ⁶ He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

⁷ The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." ⁸ So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. ⁹ There he went into a cave and spent the night.

Now here is the question. God listened but what did God see. God saw the nonverbal cues. God took care of his physical needs. God could see he was distraught. The first thing God did was, God looked after him physically. Now here is his issue, you will find out later. The issue with him is that he is not listening to God, he is presumptuous. In chapter 18, he did all this bang-bang thing, he goes back to town and he expects the same, he is being presumptuous. A lot of problems that we have with listening is that we are presumptuous, we assume. We assume of others and we assume of God.

And the word of the Lord came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁰ He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

He is now in the pity zone. I did so much for you God. It is the same like, I did so much for FBC, so much for the ministry, nobody appreciated me.

¹¹ The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁴ He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

Verse 10 and 14 are identical. Meaning God's empathy is so much, when the first time Elijah told him, God didn't reply him. So this is what God did in empathy. First God took care of him physically. Secondly, God takes care of him emotionally and then in verse 13 when he repeats the same question, now God takes care of him spiritually.

¹⁵The Lord said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram.

Now the rest of this simply means he is empowering Elijah as a prophet. Verse 18 is community support

¹⁸Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him."

You are wrong Elijah, not everybody's knees will bow, you are not alone. Now the process is quite interesting. So first thing first in context is, when you see someone who have got a problem, you have to put yourself in their shoes and look at their physical condition. That's the first thing and the first thing God did was, he is emotionally distraught, he is in such a bad state, God looked at him holistically, God took care of his physical needs. So sometimes before we open our mouth, look at the other person, they could be medically having a problem, they could be very tired after work and nobody likes coming after home, open the door you just pa pa pa pa. We do that to one another in marriage. Sometimes your wife is so busy over the household, you go back there, hey why you never do this. You follow me, your wife is tired. So the first sin we often do that we don't look at another person's physical needs. Sometimes people are stressed, they are tired. Second thing, what God does is God shifts his perspective.

You notice, there was first a wind then there was an earthquake and then fire and God is trying to tell you, these three are not there. Where was the wind, the earthquake and fire? It was when Elijah destroyed the prophets of Baal. Elijah is expecting God to reply that way and God says no I am going to come in a whisper to you. So he is trying to shift his perspective. You know, sometimes listen to my voice, it is soft. What it means is that, when you are talking to people and you are very emotionally worked up you are so strung you don't hear God speaking to you. When you are in a fight with your wife or your husband or you are in the church because suddenly I heard someone saying something about me and I want to whack him and that's is what we all do. We are reactive but God is whispering to you and we fail to do that.

I am going to give you some examples to see how much you have learned tonight.

Type of responses to listening:-

1. Advice Giving Responses.
2. Information Responses.
3. Critical Responses.
4. Empathy Responses.

Adapted from Madelyn Burnley Allen, Listening: The Forgotten Skill

1. My boss just hired a manager. I was hoping to get that post but they got somebody from outside the company. They must think I am not qualified for the promotion.
 - a. You must be terribly disappointed. Empathy response.

- b. Maybe the person is more qualified than you are. Critical response.
- c. I think you should tell your boss how you feel and your interest in advancement. Advice giving response.
- d. What is the qualification for this promotion? Information response

The correct answer is A. Because the guy is hurt. He wants you to feel his pain. He don't want you to tell him anything else. It is not saying that the rest of you is not correct, but this is what God did. God knew Elijah wasn't ready, so God went in stages. Feed you first, whisper to you first then only tell you what to do.

- 1. I don't know what happened to me lately. I keep making the same mistakes. My boss has yelled at me a few times. I don't blame him for being unhappy with me.
 - a. Why are you making the same mistakes? Information response
 - b. Why don't you apologise to your boss and tell him how sorry you are? Advice giving response
 - c. I hate to have someone yell at me when I make mistakes. Empathy response.
 - d. You need to be more careful at work. As Christians we should give our best. Critical response.

The answer is C.

- 1. In the meeting my chairman does not really listen to me. No point in sharing because in the end he always does what he has planned.
 - a. Pray about it and at the right time tell him how you feel. Advice giving response.
 - b. You need to submit to his authority. Maybe God is teaching you something. Critical response.
 - c. What kind of things have you shared? Information response.
 - d. It's frustrating when someone won't hear you out. Empathy response

The answer is D.

- 1. In my family everyone depends on me. I am tired of shouldering that responsibility
 - a) It seems like you are feeling overwhelmed trying to help your family. Empathy response.
 - b) Do you have to do everything? Is there somebody else who can help you? Information response.
 - c) Have a family gathering and tell them your situation. Advice giving response.
 - d) You need to depend on God more for added strength to take care of your family. Critical response.

The answer is A.

If you look at the Elijah's story. Let me recap in close, God answers Elijah after three calls. The first call, God didn't answer him, He fed him. Second time he complained he didn't answered him, he whispered to him. Only the third time he told him what to do. You follow me. That is what we are trying to say today. You don't every time someone tells you something, it doesn't mean they are asking you to give them advice. So we want to take that to home.