



Week 1, Day 3:

Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut.

Proverbs 10:19

Everybody is listening all the time.

But who or what are we listening to, and are we paying attention to what we're hearing?

As God's people, we have his Spirit in us, regularly speaking to us through the Scriptures as we read them and recall them; through his church as we interact with one another; and personally as we listen closely to His voice (in John 10:1–21, Jesus said his sheep hear and listen to his voice, and in John 14–15, he said his Spirit would be the means by which we abide with him and are led by him).

So the first question is this: Are you listening to God's Spirit through his Word, his community, and his personal communication to you directly?

Second, who or what is the loudest voice in your life? Is it God's Spirit, or is it someone or something else? You won't be able to join God in his work all around you if you aren't paying attention to him. So we need to listen for our own good, but others need us to listen to them.

One of the greatest gifts we can give one another is a set of open ears and a closed mouth. Sure, there are times to speak, but are we willing to listen to one another? People in the United States spend billions of dollars on counseling or mental-health care each year. Certainly some of this care needs to be given by professionally trained counselors. However, large numbers of the people seeking counseling are primarily looking for others to listen to them.

I have found that listening is one of my greatest acts of faith and dependency on God. It reminds me that he is at work even when I'm not talking—maybe more so. Proverbs 10:19 says, "When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent." Listening also reminds me that the Spirit can speak to others in our silence. In fact, our willingness to quiet our souls and care for others often creates the best space for the Spirit to work. One of Jesus's titles is "Wonderful Counselor" (Isa. 9:6). He said that when he left he would send "another Counselor" (John 14:16 RSV), the Holy Spirit, to come and dwell in us. If you are a follower of Jesus, you have the Counselor living in you. Listen to him! And listen to others.

PRAYER: *God as I seek to become a better listener to others, help me to be more attentive to your voice through Your Spirit speaking to me and through others.*