

Communicating means *listening*

*If you are willing to listen, you will learn;
if you give heed, you will be wise.*

Sirach 6:33

Listening is just as important in communication as speaking. When we communicate we must balance *listening* with *responding*. How?

- **Active listening** - engage the *person*, *hear* him/her - don't just think of how you will respond - you'll be likely to miss what is actually being said.
- **Reflect back** - this shows you're listening. It doesn't mean just "parroting back" what the other person said; it can be a way of clarifying what you heard. Maybe you didn't understand what the other person said, or perhaps the message was unclear. You may hear something that the other person **did not intend to communicate**. Repeat back what they said, or ask a question. Taking time to do this can save you from misunderstanding - and from unintentionally hurting each other.
- **Don't be defensive** - This can be difficult, but dialogue **does not mean "attack and defend."** It means listening to the person speaking (and he/she should be speaking in *love* and with *respect*), and being humble enough to realize you may be

wrong. You may be angry with each other, but it doesn't mean you don't still love each other.

- **Respond with honesty** - be truthful, but without intentionally hurting the other, shaming them, or making them feel guilty. That is manipulation, and love doesn't manipulate or coerce the beloved.
- **Forgive** - Despite our best efforts, we all say things we don't mean when we're angry or hurt. If that happens, real love (gift of self) requires that we ask forgiveness - and that we are **open ourselves** to another's apology. Loving someone means acknowledging when we are wrong, and being humble enough to ask for forgiveness. That humility extends to the one who is hurt, too. It's not always easy, but accepting an apology given in good faith goes a long way toward re-establishing trust and strengthening your love for each other.



*Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger,
for the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God.*

James 1:19-20