

# Listening:

## Give one's attention to



James admonished his readers to be slow to speak and quick to listen (James 1:19). Too often, we are not quick to listen; in fact, often we don't listen at all. Or, as one person wrote, we don't listen to understand, we listen to reply. We may be focused on the television or our phone or something else and do not give the other person our attention. Years ago, I believed that I could "multi-task;" listen to my wife while continuing to do whatever I was doing - for me it was writing or working on the computer. Researchers have found that people cannot multi-task, we can't do two things at once. To truly hear and understand my spouse, I need to give her my attention.

Now, when my wife wants to speak to me, I will ask for a few minutes to finish what I am doing or stop what I am doing and give her my full attention. She feels respected, and as I *actively* listen to her, she feels heard and understood. It is *not* that difficult! It is a matter of making the choice to honor our spouse and hearing what they have to say. We give our attention to them by stopping what we are doing, looking at them, and focusing on what they are saying rather than thinking about other things. Active listening means that we engage; we provide feedback to show that we are hearing what the other person is saying. That feedback can be nodding the head, facial gestures, making small verbal comments, or asking questions.

Do you listen to your spouse? Your children or others? Truly listen by giving your attention to them. I think of the corporate executive I watched years ago, who when addressed by a child, squatted down to eye level with the child and gave him his undivided attention. *That* is listening! We can all improve our listening skills and I would challenge you to honestly evaluate how well you give your attention to your spouse and others and then seek to improve your listening skills.

**Helpful Resources:** *Fortified Marriages Resource page:* [www.fortifiedmarriages.com](http://www.fortifiedmarriages.com)

The *Fortified Marriages Manual and Workbook* is a great tool to help couples grow in their communication and effectively hear each other.

*The Importance of Listening* - [marriagetoday.com](http://marriagetoday.com)

*5 Tips for Improving Marital Listening Skills* - [www.foryourmarriage.org](http://www.foryourmarriage.org)