

‘Listen Up’ and Win Her Heart

Married men have gargantuan responsibility to provide, protect, lead, love, be available for the kids, shepherd the family faith and, most importantly, wear the pressure that accompanies these responsibilities and burdens.

In the midst of the battle, we also have the daunting assignment of cultivating and protecting that most mysterious marital commodity called I-N-T-I-M-A-C-Y. You know—that unspoken, life-giving connection with your wife that feels like Christmas morning.

When it comes to the issue of connection between husbands and wives, I am reminded of the cell phone commercial that asked: “How many bars do you have?” Everyone gets it. The more bars you see displayed on your screen the better your connection. Now ask the same question measuring your connection level with your wife. Full bars? Two bars? No service?

The No. 1 complaint wives have about their men is, “He doesn’t listen to me because he’d rather ‘fix’ the situation.” “Listening” must not be confused with “hearing,” that biological miracle that helps us interact with our environment. Listening is an acquired skill, a conscious effort to take in what is being said by another person.

Keyword? Conscious, which means present, aware and concerned. The issue women raise is that we men are more concerned about the problem than we are about them. Get that. For them the problem is never more important than the person. Great listening focuses on the person not just the problem. That may or may not come up later.

In Romans 14:19, the Bible says we are to make “every effort to do what leads to peace and edification.” Unfortunately, men often overlook the power of active listening which leads to mutual demolition vs. edification. That’s exactly what our

enemy wants. He loves a bad listener.

Poor listening:

- Kills intimacy
- Creates resentment and contempt
- Increases vulnerability to sin

If you are struggling with motivation to work on your listening skills, consider this:

“...You husbands **must** give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God’s gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered” (I Peter 3:7).

In this verse, God commands you to elevate your wife to a high position by honoring her, by appreciating her with understanding. Ultimately, God is evaluating husband’s efforts to connect with wives. If we do not, our prayers will be hindered. God’s point is crystal clear for husbands: Your connection with your wife will either *help* or *harm* your relationship with God.

Fortunately, the Bible also gives us the formula that looks like this:

“You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry” (James 1:19).

Quick + Slow + Slow = Understanding

Instead, we often are slow to listen, and quick to speak and quick to get angry.

Listening is not easy, especially when emotions are running hot and there’s a lot at stake. So, it takes practice to overcome these barriers to good listening:

- Men want the bottom line, not the details
- Men's agenda suffers when stopping to listen
- Men want to feel in control and listening gives that away
- Men are distracted, i.e. ESPN
- Men are bad at dealing with feelings
- Men's fatigue reduces energy to listen
- Men are in a hurry

But husbands who win in their marriage will tune in. Here are a few quick pointers:

Create quiet. Don't allow chaos. Turn off the noise and distractions. Put the kids to bed and make an environment for conversation.

Turn and face. Don't talk into space. Turn your body and mind to face your wife and look into her eyes. Be present in the conversation, not just present in the room.

Repeat. Don't delete. Active listening involves hearing her words, interpreting them and saying them back to her to confirm you've got her intent. Don't dismiss what she says.

Act. Don't ignore. Demonstrate your understanding by taking action, without announcing it. Listening followed by ignoring the conversation suggests you're manipulating her instead of honoring her.

Men need to earn a Ph.D. on their wives. Be a life-long learner about her so your marriage and relationship with God will become more intimate.

Kenny Luck, founder of Every Man Ministries, men's pastor at Saddleback Church, and ChristianMingle advisory board member, provides biblically oriented teaching and leadership for men and pastors seeking relevant, timely material that battle cultural, worldly concepts threatening men and God's men. Follow Kenny and Every Man Ministries now

on Facebook, Twitter (@everyMM) and YouTube.

For the original article, visit .