



April 16, 2025

MESSENGER

QUOTE FOR TODAY

"Palm Sunday is the day Jesus begins his final triumph over disease, depression, death and darkness. We haven't seen the fulfillment of that triumph but one day we will see complete victory."

Pastor Connie in this week's sermon

INFO

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Time To Listen

A familiar line from the Book of Ecclesiastes points out that

For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven.

Among examples that follow, the author includes

... a time to keep silent and a time to speak.
(Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7)

I think most of us have more trouble with the *time to keep silent* part of this wise advice.

Winston Churchill was famous for his eloquent public speeches, but one of his most memorable lines is this: "Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen." American humorist Will Rogers put it more bluntly: "Never miss a good chance to shut up."

Easter is definitely a time when we should do a lot more listening than speaking. And yet, as C.S. Lewis observed,

"Inner silence is for our race a difficult achievement. There is a chattering part of the mind which continues, until it is corrected, to chatter on even in the holiest places."

One of the primary reasons marriages break down is described as "failure to communicate." But when you talk with couples about this, each is anxious to tell their side of the story. Which kind of exposes the real problem: It's not so much a failure to communicate as a failure to receive communication; inability to listen.

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(Continued from other side)

Some people who have become aware that they have listening problems have found that there are practical things they can do to change the pattern in their relationships. Psychologists who have studied these communication issues recommend a strategy they refer to as “ACTIVE LISTENING,” which includes facing the other person, maintaining eye contact, looking for nonverbal clues, trying to sense the feelings behind the word and holding back on immediate responses.¹ One training program advocates that total listening hasn’t taken place until the listener can repeat back what the other person just said to their satisfaction. Only then should they respond.²

Think of the example of God who “shuts up” so he can listen to you! That’s what his invitation “Pray to the Father” implies: he’s willing to turn off his eternal flow of knowledge and wisdom long enough to hear you express yourself, as petty as your concerns may be. He encourages you to get it all out. He wants you to feel that you have been fully heard. He knows how to listen actively!

Now he’s ready to speak. If you listen to him this Easter, you’ll find that he’s not interested in debating all the concerns you’ve raised during the forty days of Lent. That would be like studying the dead body in the tomb. The Risen Christ has something much better to say about the new you he has in mind, the resurrected version of you, the you of greater potential and fulfillment.

Will you be listening?

Pastor George Van Alstine

¹ For more good Active Listening advice, read this article: <https://positivepsychology.com/active-listening-techniques/>

² Taught in Transactional Analysis workshops: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/transactional-analysis-eric-berne.html>