



SERIES: APRIL – YES, YOU CAN! OVERCOMING YOUR STRUGGLES

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Friday, 04/08/2022

Scripture: Proverbs 18:2

TITLE: Listen Up

Sick of it. That's how I feel about the unending season of COVID. What was projected to last two weeks has lasted over two years. And let's face it, there's an opportunity to criticize someone each and every moment. From the politician to the family member, there is a great opportunity for being destructive with our words.

Many of you today have shared that you are struggling with criticizing others. Well, you're in good company. I have been the first to open my mouth even when I know I shouldn't. Is there a better way to go? There is. This is what King Solomon wrote in Proverbs 18:2 (CSB):

A fool does not delight in understanding, but only wants to show off his opinions.

Your opinion may be right. You may have the truth. And how, when, and where you share it may make you look like a fool. What's the better way to go? What's the alternative to criticizing others? Seek understanding.

Author Ty Bennet says this, "We need to encourage others to talk, and we need to listen to understand what they are saying. This is an active process. It's the ability to walk in someone's shoes and understand them without judging or fixing."

This doesn't mean we validate a wrong answer or conviction. It means we care about them and where they are coming from. When we do this, people are more likely to trust you and your insight.

It's easy to get angry at the world, our leaders, and the people around us. It is a very troubling time, but Solomon said, "*The one who has knowledge restrains his words, and one who keeps a cool head is a person of understanding*" (Proverbs 17:27).

This is why James would tell us to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. When we learn to become interested rather than interesting, we will become more empathic and influential in the lives of the people around us.

So here's my challenge for you today: listen up. As hard as it is today, if you begin to become angry and critical of someone else, pause and seek understanding. Ask questions to understand their position. Find out what they believe and why they believe it! When we do this, we will become less critical in our spirit and helpful to loving people and pointing them back to our Savior.

When we listen up, we will win the day.