**Listen Deeply Before You Speak And Give Advice**

The verses below may be some of the most important teachings that we as fathers will ever receive. Kids often do and say things that we need to address and correct, but in order to most effectively help them, we need to listen to them fully and carefully before we respond. We need to be sure that we draw them out and understand them deeply before giving them our advice and opinions.

These two verses teach us how vital that deep listening is:

He who answers before listening—

that is his folly and his shame.

Proverbs 18:13

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

James 1:19-20

When we quickly respond, we may feel we have said the right thing in just the right way, but unless we take the time to grasp all the facts and fully understand what is on our child’s mind and heart, we may totally misfire! Let’s learn the art of asking children questions and drawing them out before we give them our advice, corrections, or thoughts.

Solomon provides some great wisdom that applies not only as we seek to help fellow adults, but also as fathers seeking to help our kids:

The purposes of a man’s heart are deep waters,

but a man of understanding draws them out. (Proverbs 20:5)

Try asking some of the following kinds of questions before you start giving them advice:

* “And then what happened?”
* “What do you think about it?”
* “How do you feel about it?”
* “Please help me to understand more about this.”

Fathers, let’s seek to *get all the facts* and *hear all their feelings* before we render judgment and start giving advice. Some kids are less likely to talk and open up than others. As we learned in Proverbs 20:5, we need to seek to “draw them out.”

Even if it turns out our kid is egregiously wrong, asking questions will give us a sense of the whole picture so we can help them better. And when children feel confident that we know everything that happened *and* understand how they feel, they are far more likely to embrace our guidance. On the other hand, if they feel like we just reacted quickly or angrily, they will likely have a much harder time accepting our advice.

 Paul reminds us not to react in anger and frustration:

*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.* (Ephesians 4:29)

So, fellow fathers, let’s seek to patiently listen, ask questions, and gain full knowledge before we react and give counsel to our kids. As we do so, we will give them wiser and more spiritually grounded guidance. And, because of this, our kids will be far more likely to hear and embrace it, because they will have felt our kind and loving patience for them!

Please know that l learned to do this by the kind and gracious guidance of my loving Father in Heaven. And, as we will see below, my daughter and my son are going to share how this helped them, and how they are now seeking to do the same as they raise their own kids.

Elizabeth’s response:

 When I was in middle school, I once got really angry because my team’s basketball game got canceled. The cancelation meant my team was disqualified from the championship game. It was totally unfair, and I was furious! I felt ignored, cheated, and mistreated by the Evil Adult Basketball Powers That Be.

My anger was out of control—I just couldn’t calm myself down. It must have been tempting to get frustrated with me and rebuke me for having a bad temper, but that’s not what Dad did. He came into my room, sat on the bed across from me, and patiently drew me out, asking all kinds of questions about what happened and how I was feeling. The more questions he asked and the more sympathetically he listened, the more my temper cooled. Just *feeling heard* *by an adult* did so much to alleviate my frustration.

But Dad took it a step further: he went on to tell me he understood how I felt! He knew what it felt like to feel treated unfairly, and he understood that it was frustrating for a competitive person to “lose” a game she’d never gotten to play! He validated my feelings, and as he did so, I was able to let go of my anger, forgive, and stop stomping around the house like an angry bull bent on destruction.

Now as I parent my own children, I keep in mind Dad’s example of asking questions, listening closely, getting the whole story, and validating my kids’ feelings before I start offering them advice. Dad’s example has helped me to be a much wiser and more effective mom!

David’s response:

This teaching cuts me to my heart. I’m ashamed to confess that I fail too often in this area with my three children. It’s so much more convenient to quickly fire off a response instead of patiently listening before instructing. Sometimes I simply feel I don’t have the time to hear my kids out. At other times their issues seem too trivial to devote my precious brain cells to. And many times I simply assume that I already grasp the situation. I’m very grateful for the times growing up when my dad listened to my issues, thoughts and feelings rather than shutting me down. As I grew older that allowed him to help me untangle and sort out my jumbled teenage thoughts. I’m sure my problems often seemed petty to him, but he seldom made me feel that way. I remember on many occasions being so encouraged when he would relate to me by sharing times he felt or did something similar as a young person. It helped me to feel that he at least somewhat understood and it kept the lines of communication open. Thank God that he is the same way: always listening to our prayers. Everyday without fail.