

Proverbs for Teachers 5

A reprint series for LEA members
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Learn to listen! Opportunity often knocks softly.

Practice What You Teach

Prov. 23:12

God was a skillful Creator. Among the many marvelous moving parts, he gave humans features that suggest something about appropriate behavior. Ears are made to be open, but the mouth is made to shut. Proverbs puts it this way: “Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge” (Prov. 23:12). This is the learning strategy we so often try to apply when we tell students, “Listen!”

Listening involves more than hearing: “Apply your heart,” the Bible says. Somewhere between going in one ear and out the other, knowledge must drop down to the heart.

Teachers need to be good listeners. Listening to students provides clues about empty places that need filling with Jesus’ love. It opens an opportunity to discuss with students God’s expectations of those whom He loves, and it alerts you to potentially dangerous situations. Listening offers an opportunity to show you care—even if listening is the only thing you can do.

Teachers need to listen to their Teacher. Perhaps you regret not being around when Jesus taught in person. Oh, to be among the Master Teacher’s disciples, to tug on His robe when you have a question, to hear His words of encouragement! Of course, His original twelve disciples didn’t have good academic records. They forgot quickly. They thought they understood when they really didn’t. Yet, Jesus kept them close and patiently reviewed previous lessons.

To be a truly good teacher, listen to God as He talks to people today. The Bible is His Word. And when we’re forgetful or shortsighted or bored, His Word remains close to us, leaping to life during times of need. And it’s especially comforting and instructive as it addresses the greatest need—the need for forgiveness. As Jesus practiced what he taught, so practice what you teach. And don’t forget the part about forgiveness!

Pray: Open my ears, Lord. I hunger for the words of Jesus for both my students and myself. Amen.

Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge (Prov. 23:12).

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