

Communication: Elihu's Patience

Job 32:4 “Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than he.
5 When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was kindled.”

Job 32:11 “Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say.”

Job 32:16 “When I had waited, (for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more;)”

You may have heard someone jokingly say, “Lord, give me patience and give it to me now!” Many relate to this jest since patience can be a human struggle. And when it comes to a disagreement or argument, the average person's patience wears thin very quickly. Yet, if a marriage is to succeed, the husband and wife must learn patience in communication. **Patience is extremely important considering that men and women often communicate differently.** The wife may want to take the long way in describing her views while the husband wants the fast track to the finish. Patience is imperative for both.

To get a background on what is happening here in Job 32, see our first article “Communication: Elihu's Opinion”. It's interesting that to stress Elihu's opinion, God mentioned 3 times in Job 32 “mine opinion”. To stress Elihu's patience, God again mentions Elihu's “waiting” 3 times (our texts). It is obvious that God wants the reader to receive instruction in both areas.

Before we hear one word from Elihu, 30 chapters of dialogue have taken place! After Job's terrible trials are described in chapters 1 and 2, Job begins talking in chapter 3. From then on, Job and his three main friends argue back and forth until Elihu speaks up in chapter 32. **That is a lot of patience especially considering that Elihu did not agree with Job or his friends.** Amazingly, Elihu did not speak up until he noticed that neither side was coming up with a reasonable argument. Only then did he state what he thought, and still Elihu showed great respect to his elders and stressed that what he says is simply “mine opinion”. What patience!

Also notice that Elihu did not get upset until after the men had fully conversed back and forth and did not come up with a decent argument against Job.

James 1:19 “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:”

The steps to having a good conversation are simple: swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. That is exactly what Elihu did, and every husband and wife must follow James' exhortation to have good communication. Too often we are quicker to speak than

we are to listen. This weakness shows up clearly when the other party says something you do not agree with and you start interrupting them. **Habitual interruption is a definite sign of not really being interested in the other person's views.** Many marriages break down in their communication when one or both parties reverse James 1:19 to be swift to wrath, swift to speak, and slow to hear! At the same time, though, even if the other party is not following proper communication etiquette, you still need to be “slow to wrath”.

Interestingly, after Elihu spoke for just a few words despite the long conversation the other men had, Elihu then waited again in verse 16 to give the other men a chance to answer back. They did not, so Elihu continued his speech. **A conversation breaks down easily when at least one person keeps talking and talking without an end.** This is rude and uncaring to your spouse (or anyone else for that matter). Learn like Elihu to patiently wait your turn and not control the conversation when it is your turn.