

RAD

WEEK 1 (HYBRID)

BIG IDEA

James 1:19-21; Psalm 15; Luke 10:25-28

Bible

James 1:19-21; Psalm 15; Luke 10:25-28

WHAT?

POLL | Would You Say It?

- In this series, we're flashing back to the 90s — an era when everything was pretty "rad." But since none of you were around in the 90s, let me give you a history lesson. I'll teach you some 90s slang and then you can vote on whether or not we should bring it back.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read and define a handful of phrases from the 90s. Then have students vote on whether or not it's a phrase they would use by raising their hands, standing up, cheering, or running to a spot in the room that you designate. You might use words or phrases like . . .*
 - "Sup?"
 - "Fly."
 - "You go, girl."
 - "Talk to the hand."
 - "All that and a bag of chips."
 - "Home skillet."
 - "Booyah!"
 - "Aiight."
 - "Da bomb."
 - "Phat."
 - "No duh."

ACTIVITY | Humdinger: 90s Edition

- Now that we've covered the 90s iconic 90s slang, let's cover its iconic music.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, make a list of 90s hits students would recognize, create a playlist of those songs, and have a pair of headphones ready. (For extra 90s vibes, use a [Walkman](#), [boombox](#), or [portable CD player](#).) To play, bring one or more students to the front of the room to be your "hummers," while the remaining students guess the songs*

they're humming. For each round, put 30 seconds on the clock, give one of your hummers the headphones, and have them hum the song they hear until the crowd guesses correctly or time runs out. Here are a few suggestions . . .

- "I Want it That Way" (Backstreet Boys)
- "Waterfalls" (TLC)
- "The Boy is Mine" (Brandy & Monica)
- "MMMBop" (Hanson)
- "Baby One More Time" (Britney Spears)
- "I Will Always Love You" (Whitney Houston)
- "Jesus Freak" (DC Talk)
- Does anyone else find this game fun *and* frustrating?
 - If you were a hummer, you probably thought, "Come on! It's obvious! Why aren't you listening?"
 - If you were a listener, you may have thought, "I'm listening, but I have no idea what you're trying to say!"
- Maybe one of the reasons this game is so funny is because we all struggle to communicate sometimes.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share.
 - **What's your favorite thing to listen to?**
 - **Name someone in your life who is a good listener. What makes them such a good listener?**

VIDEO | The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air, Jazz Gets Thrown Out

- Sometimes, our problem is listening, **but other times, our problem is speaking.**
- In *The Fresh Prince*, Will's best friend Jazz talks a lot. He always has a joke, comment, or comeback ready, but his mouth often gets him in trouble. Every time he says something that crosses the line, he gets thrown out of the house — literally.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (0:00-0:20) of Jazz repeatedly getting thrown out of the house. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)

POLL | What About You?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Have students reply to the following questions by raising their hands.
- So what about you?
 - **Have you ever felt like you weren't being listened to?**
 - **Do you think anyone has ever felt like you weren't listening to them?**
 - **Do you know anyone whose words get them into trouble? (Is it you?)**
 - **Have you ever said something because you were angry that you later regretted?**

- **Have you ever wished you had listened a little bit more than you had spoken?**
- Today, we're going to talk about talking and listening. Because, as we'll see, God has something to say about how we communicate with each other, and it's pretty radical.

SO WHAT?

THAT'S RAD

- In the 90s, "radical" meant "cool." The word "radical" sometimes has negative connotations. People with extreme or dangerous views (especially when it comes to politics or religion) are often called "radical."
- But "radical" has a positive meaning too! If you're radical, you might . . .
 - Not be content with the status quo.
 - Be a little different from everyone else.
 - Be committed to changing the world for good.
- Did you know Jesus was accused of being "radical?" No one used that *exact* word 2,000 years ago, but there were plenty of people who thought Jesus' message was too different, extreme, or revolutionary.
 - What Jesus said about God's love was radical.
 - How Jesus told us to love each other was radical too.

IMAGE | The Book of James

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Show an image of the book of James on screen — either a modern Bible open to James (like [this](#)) or an image of an early manuscript (like [this](#) or [this](#)).*
- If we were looking in the Bible for practical advice on how to be radically different from the rest of the world, we might end up in the book of James.
 - This "book" is a letter written by James, Jesus' brother. Because they grew up together, Jesus was a big influence on James' life.
 - The book of James is packed with the teachings of Jesus, but James usually summarizes Jesus instead of quoting Him directly. James knew Jesus' teachings so well that retelling Jesus' messages in his own words was easy.

SCRIPTURE | James 1:19-20

- James is known for its straightforward instructions for how to follow Jesus. These teachings might seem simple, but they have the power to create radical change.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read James 1:19-20.*
- James says to be **quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.** These instructions are easy to understand, but not so easy to do, because they go against our human nature.
 - **Be quick to listen?** But the average human only has an eight-second attention span.

- **Be slow to speak?** But we all want to share our thoughts and opinions! After all, we're usually right . . . right?
- **Be slow to get angry?** But how are we supposed to control that?
- Most of the time, we're slow to listen, quick to speak, and quick to get angry.
 - Instead of listening to others, we're consumed with our own lives, thoughts, wants, worries, and insecurities.
 - Instead of being careful with our words, we say things that cause hurt and pain, or try to show we're smarter or more right than someone else.
 - Instead of managing our emotions wisely, we let our feelings of defensiveness, frustration, and anger control how we treat people.
- James says this isn't what God says is right or "righteous." It's certainly not loving. If you want to know what *is* right or loving in God's eyes, look to Jesus.
 - **He was quick to listen.** Jesus listened carefully to others and asked great questions.
 - **He was slow to speak.** Even when He was asked a question, Jesus often asked more questions of His own before giving an answer.
 - **He was slow to get angry.** Jesus did get angry sometimes, but never over the petty things we get angry about. He was patient and generous with people — even His "enemies."
- When we love others like Jesus loves, it has the power to change us, others, and the world in radical ways.

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 15

- But that's not all. When we love others like Jesus loves, it has a radical impact on our relationship with God too.
- Jesus often quoted the book of Psalms, a collection of prayers and songs written many years before Jesus came to earth. Psalm 15 talks to us about how we can be close to God. Listen carefully to see if you can hear any similarities to what James wrote.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Psalm 15.*

QUESTION | What did you hear?

- Did you notice any similarities between the words of David and the words of James? **What did you hear?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond.*
- David says people who want to be close to God don't speak poorly of others, don't harm others, and do speak truth. This sounds a lot like what James said.
 - Can you imagine how your relationship with God might change if you tried to be more like Jesus in this way? Through Jesus, we can have a relationship with God no matter what we've done. But like the psalmist wrote, it's hard to feel close with God when you're mistreating the people God made and loves.
 - Can you imagine how your family, friends, school, or the world, could be different if everyone treated each other this way? If we were slower to speak or get angry, and quicker to listen, the change would be radical.
- So do you want to see that radical change? Are you not sure what you think about Jesus yes, but you know you want to see more good and less hate in the world? Then James tells us how to love like Jesus: **radical people listen more than they speak.**

NOW WHAT?

STORY | Talk about a time someone listened to you.

- You probably can't change the whole world, but you can show others the radical love of Jesus just by listening.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a student or volunteer to tell a story) about a time when someone loved you by listening to you. Maybe they listened to your perspective during a disagreement, or took time to get to know you when you felt alone, or checked on you during a difficult time. Share how that simple act made a big difference.*
- It might seem insignificant, but how many great listeners do you really know? Learning to listen is an act of love that's actually pretty radical.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - **How can you tell when someone isn't really interested in what you have to say? How does that feel?**
 - * **Why do you think most people spend more time speaking than they spend listening?**

DISCUSSION | A Radical Listening Brainstorm

- There are so many ways to James' words into practice, but today I want us to focus on listening, because . . .
 - When we're busy listening, we're not busy speaking.
 - When we take time to listen, our anger has time to subside.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *On a white board, chalk board, or bulletin board, brainstorm responses to some or all of the following questions.*
 - **When might you really want someone to listen to you?** *When you're angry, during an argument, when you're lonely or sad . . .*
 - **How do you know when someone is listening to you?** *They make eye contact, put down their phone, lean in, ask questions, don't interrupt . . .*
 - **When someone listens to you, how do you feel?** *Loved, comforted, respected, cared for, not alone . . .*

ACTIVITY | Active Listening

- We might think we know how to listen to others, but do we? It's not always easy, is it? Think about it this way — there are four ways you can love someone by listening to them.
 1. **LISTEN WITH YOUR HEART.** Listening is more than just passively hearing. It's actively caring about what someone is saying. We know we're truly listening when others' words move from our ears to our hearts.
 2. **LISTEN WITH YOUR MIND.** It's easy to let your mind wander when someone is talking, so practice active listening by paying close attention to others' words. Don't miss what they're saying because you're thinking about what you're going to say next.
 3. **LISTEN WITH YOUR BODY.** Put down your phone. Look people in the eye. Lean forward. Nod sometimes. This will help you listen better and let others know you care.
 4. **LISTEN WITH CURIOSITY.** Sometimes we listen just because we are trying to be polite, but politeness isn't the goal. The goal is to listen so we can love people better. So decide to be curious about other people. Then challenge yourself to ask others more questions — questions that show you care.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break students into pairs and challenge them to practice active listening for one minute each as they take turns answering a question like, "What's something you love?"*

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - * **What are some ways our relationships with others can be damaged when we don't listen well?**
 - **Read Luke 10:25-28. In this story, how do you see Jesus listening to others?**
 - * **What are some ways listening can help us show people God's love?**

LISTENING TO GOD AND OTHERS

- This week, choose a friend (or stranger!) who might need someone to really hear them. Then practice listening with your heart, mind, body, and curiosity. Because listening is one way we can model the radical love of Jesus.
- But what about listening to God? Do these same ideas apply? Yes! We all know how to ask God for things, but it's not always easy to know how to listen for God's voice.
 - Some people think God only speaks to us during big moments or elaborate experiences, but that's not true. God can speak to us through the Bible, music, movies, stories, books, art, nature, conversations, and so much more.
 - God is always speaking, but we have to learn to listen. How? The same way we listen to each other.
 - **With our hearts,** by caring what God has to say.
 - **With our minds,** by setting aside time to listen carefully.
 - **With our bodies,** maybe by closing our eyes, raising our hands, kneeling, going on a walk, or just putting our phones in the other room for a few minutes.
 - **With our curiosity,** by asking God questions, deciding to learn more, and wondering what God is like.
- This week, will you decide to do something radical? Will you decide to love God and others better this week by listening? I hope so! Because **radical people listen more than they speak.**

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - **What are some situations where you find yourself speaking more than you listen? Why do you think that is?**
 - * **Which kind of listening is most difficult for you — listening with your heart, mind, body, or curiosity? What's an example?**
 - **This week, what's one thing you can do to listen to others more? What about listening to God?**