



# COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

## I Have Questions - Arguing

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

### BOTTOM LINE

**You never win an argument if you lose the relationship.**

### GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students understand that the real “win” in an argument is to preserve the relationship with the other person even if we disagree with them.

### SCRIPTURE

*My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry (James 1:19 NIV).*

### TEACHING OUTLINE

#### INTRODUCTION

- No matter who you are, where you live, or what kind of personality you have, you have experienced what it feels like to be in an argument.
- *Communicator Note: Tell a personal story about the way you argued growing up, including who you most often argued with and what you argued about.*
- Everyone has a go-to style for arguing. In the same way, nearly everybody has something they want to fight **for**—a subject that gets you ready to throw down.

#### TENSION

- Our worlds are full of arguments and the options are endless.
- When the world around you is in constant conflict, most people tend to do one of three things:
  - Go straight to anger.
  - Feel torn.
  - Couldn't care less.
- When we *really* get involved in an argument, we all just want one thing: to win.
- We all have a few tactics that we've practiced to help us win—through yelling or silence, ghosting or showing up to fight, talking *to* the person or talking about them so everybody else knows how wrong they are, etc.
- Whether in our homes, on social media, or in the culture we observe around us, we are surrounded by big questions with big arguments FOR and AGAINST nearly everything.
- With that in mind—in a time with unavoidable arguments—what are we supposed to do?
- How can we get better at arguing?

## TRUTH

- We're going to look at a passage from the book of James, who was the brother of Jesus.
- What makes James so interesting is that he didn't grow up thinking that Jesus was the Son of God. He grew up thinking that Jesus was just his older brother.
- When Jesus left home and started teaching in the Judean countryside and travelling around with messages about what God was like, what did James do? He *stayed away*.
- The point is we can assume James responded that way because they were siblings. I'm willing to guess they had conflict.
- That's why it's interesting to read what James had to say about conflict, tension, and convincing others that you're right. (*James 1:19 NIV*)
- James began to see something he didn't see before. His brother wasn't *acting* like God. He was God in a body. When James changed his mind about Jesus and saw Him for who He really was, it put everything else in perspective—including conflict.
- James instructs us to listen first. Hear things from the other person's perspective. Listen first with the intent of learning instead of trying to change someone's mind.
- James said that we should be slow to speak and slow to become angry.
- And this is important, because it doesn't mean that we shouldn't speak at all. It doesn't mean we sit back and take whatever someone throws at us.
- It means that we don't speak *reactively*. We pause, take a deep breath, and compose our thoughts and emotions before speaking.
- We all know what it's like to be quick to speak and quick to become angry. Often the people we're fighting with will matter far longer than the thing we're arguing about.
- You never win an argument if you lose the relationship.
- Maybe, instead of asking how do I win the argument, the question we *should* be asking is, "How do I win the relationship?"

## APPLICATION

- Figuring out how to handle arguments or conflict or disagreements has been one of the hardest parts of being a mature human being.
- It's not easy, but there are a few tips I've discovered that make it a little more possible:
  - Memorize this one verse. (*Communicator note: Have students repeat the verse out loud after you. The second time, have them say it with you. The third time, have them say it on their own.*)
  - Pause and Pray.
  - Empathize.

## LANDING

- We may not be able to change the way people behave when it comes to conflict, arguing, or fighting, but we can change how *we* behave in those situations.
- That's one of the reasons we think small groups are more important than ever!
- So, as you head out, think about one relationship that would be better if you practiced this verse. Then, challenge yourself to do just that: be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry with \_\_\_\_\_ (*fill in the blank with their name*).



# TEACHING SCRIPT

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### BOTTOM LINE

**You never win an argument if you lose the relationship.**

## INTRODUCTION

4 MINUTES

No matter who you are, where you live, or what kind of personality you have, you have experienced what it feels like to be in an argument. I'm quite the peacemaker now, but growing up that wasn't true. If I was in an argument, I would argue and argue and argue until my point was made or the other person was just so exhausted, they didn't care anymore. I wouldn't let it go! (Communicator note: show a YouTube clip or TikTok video of a chihuahua playing tug-of-war with a toy). The most common arguments were between my brother and I over things like whose turn it was to take the car, who controlled the remote, and the ultimate argument—which baseball team was the best. He was a Yankees fan, and I was a Braves fan. You may be like, "Who cares?" but for some reason, we did. A LOT.

And, when the exhaustion technique wasn't working, I had a secret weapon: sarcasm. I was like a master wordsmith when it came to sarcasm. No matter what he said, I had a particular set of sarcastic skills, and I knew exactly what to say to put him in his place.

When it comes to arguing, we all have a go-to style...

- Maybe your go-to move is to always be louder than the other. You will simply talk at a louder decibel in order to drown out what they are saying.
- Or, and this is a pro-move, maybe you subtly change the subject mid-argument until the whole conversation is about something different. Then you win *that* argument. Next level.
- Maybe you go passive aggressive. You make a snide comment that appears to be harmless, but you know it will be a deep cut.
- Maybe you're just plain aggressive! You flip a table and go on with your life.
- Maybe you just go silent. You retreat into your head or physically into your room, but everyone can read your face and knows exactly what you want to communicate.

Everyone has a way in which they fight. In the same way, nearly everybody has something they want to fight **for**—a subject that gets you ready to throw down.

Here's what I mean. I'm going to say something true, and you let me know how you feel about it: "Cheerleading is not a sport." (wait for boos) I'm just kidding! After watching *Cheer* on Netflix, I am totally impressed with the athleticism of cheerleaders. In fact, I think it should be classified as an extreme sport.

“School should be year-round” or “The Astros are the best baseball team” or “Snapchat is actually better than TikTok.” Or dare I mention something about politics?! Talk about opinions and fights!

You see, we all have subjects that we care about and triggering conversations that make us want to scream. Everybody has an opinion. And sometimes, those opinions bring out the fight in us.

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## TENSION

3.5 MINUTES

But we all know that our arguments and fights don't stay contained to harmless, less personal topics like calling shotgun or controlling the TV in the living room. Our worlds are full of arguments and the options are endless...

- Wanting more freedom with parents
- Who should get spots on the team
- Who has to ACTUALLY do the work on the group project

Or even more serious stuff like

- Who will win the election
- Who *should* win the election
- What people *should* do about guns or drugs or immigration or women's rights or just about anything else

For most of you, tension and arguments bother you. In fact, they're pretty annoying. You have enough to worry about in life without it.

When the world around you is in constant conflict, most people tend to do one of three things:

1. **Go straight to anger.** You pick your side and get angry that the other side even exists. So, you fight to try and change them or prove that your side is right.
2. **Feel torn.** You don't really know which side to take. Or you're not sure whether you care a lot about the argument or not. You see both sides, and with so many people angry about it, you wonder if you should be angry, too.
3. **Couldn't care less.** You're just here to watch the fight go down. You're happy to not be involved in the drama for once.

When we *really* get involved in an argument, we all just want one thing: to win. That's our ultimate goal. And we all have a few tactics that we've practiced to help us do that. Whether you win through yelling or silence, ghosting or showing up to fight, talking *to* the person or talking about them so everybody else knows how wrong they are, we all have the same goal in mind:

### To win.

We want to win. And this has never felt more important than it does right now. Whether in our homes, on social media, or in the culture we observe around us, we are surrounded by big questions with big arguments FOR and AGAINST nearly everything.

With that in mind—in a time with unavoidable arguments—what are we supposed to do? How can we get better at arguing? How do we *win*?

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## TRUTH

## 8 MINUTES

We're going to look at a passage from the book of James, who was the brother of Jesus. What makes James so interesting is that he didn't grow up thinking that Jesus was the Son of God. He grew up thinking that Jesus was just his older brother. When Jesus left home and started teaching in the Judean countryside and travelling around with messages about what God was like, what did James do? He *stayed away*. It seems like James had *zero* interest in knowing what his older brother was up to or why. Honestly, I can't blame him. Can you imagine your older brother walking around acting like he was God? (Okay, some of you can but that's a different story).

The point is we can assume James responded that way because they were siblings. They may not have fought about the remote control, TikTok, or Snapchat, but I'm willing to guess they had conflict. That's why it's interesting to read what James had to say about conflict, tension, and convincing others that you're right. James writes this...

*"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19 NIV).*

James probably spent most of his life doing what most of us have done with our siblings—being quick to *speak* and slow to listen. From what we read in the Gospels, James wasn't super supportive of what Jesus was doing. I could even imagine that he was probably...

- Quick to tell others that his brother was crazy.
- Quick to tell Jesus that there was no way He was who He claimed to be.
- Quick to defend what he thought and why he thought it.
- Quick to make a point, take a stand, and defend his position.
- Quick to fight.
- Quick to try and convince everyone that he was right.

That is, until James realized he had been wrong about all of it. By listening, most likely to Jesus' friends and followers before, or even Jesus himself, James began to see something he didn't see before. His brother wasn't *acting* like God. He was God in a body. He was who He claimed to be. When James changed his mind about Jesus and saw Him for who He really was, it put everything else in perspective—including conflict.

So, James instructs us to listen first...

- Whether you are right or whether you are wrong.
- Whether you know the whole story or you *don't care* what the whole story is.
- Whether you have a great clap-back ready or you just want or not.

No matter the situation, the response should be the same: to listen before anything else. Hear things from the other person's perspective. **Listen first with the intent of learning instead of trying to change someone's mind.**

After we listen, James said that we should be slow to speak and slow to become angry. And this is important, because it doesn't mean that we shouldn't speak at all. It doesn't mean we sit back and take whatever someone throws at us. **It means that we don't speak reactively. We pause, take a deep breath, and compose our thoughts and emotions before speaking.** Why? Because we've all been in the place where we *didn't* pause, and we said, texted, yelled, or posted something that we regret.

Slow to speak and slow to anger means that we don't let our emotions determine our reactions. And when we *do* speak, we do so purposefully and in a way that is honorable.

We all know what it's like to be quick to speak and quick to become angry. Think back to middle school. What were the things that you got so worked up about? Now think about this. Are those things important to you now? Do they even matter? I'm guessing no! I bet those arguments would

even seem silly now. But you know what *is* important? The people you were arguing with. Your siblings, parents, stepparents, or friends. They matter now. And even if they aren't in your life anymore, they matter because they're *people*. In other words, **often the people we're fighting with will matter far longer than the thing we're arguing about.**

Here's what I'm getting at...

**You never win an argument if you lose the relationship.**

We are right in the middle of a time when tensions are high and conflict is normal. In fact, conflict feels constant. Arguments are playing out in our homes, in our friendships, in our schools, and in culture. And when conflict is everywhere, the temptation is to ask, "How do I win the argument and prove that I'm right?"

But maybe that's the wrong question. Maybe, instead of asking how do I win the argument, the question we *should* be asking is, "**How do I win the relationship?**"

How can I talk about this in a way that, if we don't agree, if they're never convinced I'm right, we can still be friends?

Even if I'm never good with their opinion, is there a way we can be good? Not always, but if there is, that's a *win*.

And that slight change in the question makes all the difference in the world, because it's no longer about making the other person realize that they're wrong. **It's about making the other person realize that their relationship with you matters more than their disagreement with you.**

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## APPLICATION

3.5 MINUTES

So, there you go. All your arguments fixed. Easy, right? I'm just kidding. I know that exactly zero percent of this is easy. Real talk, figuring out how to handle arguments or conflict or disagreements has been one of the hardest parts of being a mature human being. I'm sure it is for you, too! It's not easy, but there are a few tips I've discovered that make it a little more possible.

1. **Memorize this one verse.** If we want to respond to arguments and conflict differently, we need a new technique. Just like song lyrics, when you memorize Scripture, it gets in your head and helps you think differently. And, it doesn't take long. In fact, we can do it together right now. This may sound *crazy* but say it with me three times, and you'll probably have it down.

*...Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19b NIV).*

*(Communicator note: Have students repeat the verse out loud after you. The second time, have them say it with you. The third time, have them say it on their own. Also, we have provided this verse as a lock screen image in your series downloads so students can memorize it all week.)*

2. **Pause and Pray.** Nothing helps us be "slow to speak" like pausing to pray for the other person. When we pray for someone, it changes how we think about them. Our brain naturally puts people in categories, but when we pray for them it forces us to see them as more than just one trait or one argument. It helps us to remember that they're a human who probably wants the same things as we do...which brings me to the last one:

3. **Empathize.** Empathy is what happens when you put yourself in other people's shoes. Whoever you disagree with usually has more to their story than you know. There's more to their opinions or beliefs, but it's hard to remember that if we don't pause and listen to their story before responding. Try challenging yourself to *not* respond until you've thought about it long enough that you can clearly state how they feel in a way that they would agree with. Usually, if you talk about the issue from their point of view, you can empathize even if you still disagree.

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## LANDING

1.5 MINUTES

We may not be able to change the way people behave when it comes to conflict, arguing, or fighting, but we can change how we behave in those situations.

Of course, that's always easier said than done when...

- Tomorrow at school your English teacher makes that political comment that makes you want to throw your textbook.
- Or when your team captain makes a call that literally *nobody* thinks is right.
- Or when you get home tonight and your step-dad is talking about an opinion you disagree with.

That's one of the reasons we think small groups are more important than ever. It's a place for you to talk with real people about how ideas like this one work in your real life. And, it's a group of people that can encourage you and challenge you to do the right thing, even when you aren't feeling it. So, as you head out, think about one relationship that would be better if you practiced this verse. Then, challenge yourself to do just that: be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry with \_\_\_\_\_ (*fill in the blank with their name*). *That's how you win...every time.*



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS