



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Trending: Arguing / Week 1

[PRELUDE](#)

[SOCIAL](#)

[WORSHIP](#)

[STORY](#)

[GROUPS](#)

[HOME](#)

SERIES SUMMARY

A stand-alone message on arguing.

WEEK 1: Care more about the person you're arguing with than the point you're trying to make.

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

- We argue with our families and the people in our lives a lot. And we argue about a lot of different things.
- Tell a personal story about a time you got into an argument with someone.
- It's normal to feel that arguments are bad, difficult, or uncomfortable. But arguments can be good if done in a way that's healthy and respectful.
- If we don't learn how to argue in a healthy way, our relationships will be on the line.

TENSION

- Conflict is a part of life because relationships are a part of life.
- Arguing can be challenging because:
- Feelings are involved, and we care about what we're arguing about.
- We care about who we're arguing with.

- Others may think differently than we do.
- When we argue, sometimes we avoid the person or talk to other people about the conflict.
- Instead of listening to what someone has to say, or talking to them calmly, or even ignoring it, we jump into an argument.
- We spend our energy trying to convince others that we're right because we feel like there needs to be a winner and a loser in the argument.
- What if there's another way to think about arguments that allows us to aim for more than just being right?

TRUTH

- In the book of James, we read that when it comes to others, we should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. (James 1:19)
- James' instruction was for everyone, but especially for Christians. This is how Jesus calls us to communicate with others.
- When we're "quick to listen," we listen first and try to understand what the other person is saying.
- When we're "slow to speak," we pause before speaking our minds. We stop and think before we talk.
- And when we're "slow to become angry," we lead our conversations with love instead of anger. We focus on the person instead of the point we're trying to make.
- We should care more about the person we're arguing with than the point we're trying to make.

APPLICATION

- How arguments turn out depends on how we choose to handle them.
- If we follow James' instructions and are "quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry," the way we argue and feel about others will change for the better.
- We can do this by:
- Memorizing James 1:19 so that we'll remember how to handle arguments well.
- Applying James' instructions to someone in our lives.
- Putting ourselves in someone else's shoes and trying to understand their point of view.

LANDING

- Care more about the person you're arguing with than the point you're trying to make.
- Your Small Group can help you understand others' views and ways of thinking, so that's what you're going to keep talking about in groups today.
- When I argue, do I argue to win or to understand?

THINK ABOUT THIS

Middle schoolers see the world in a very black and white way. And that means most of them probably see arguing similarly. In other words, they probably think it's bad. The goal of this conversation is to help them see that arguments can have both a positive and negative impact. It's all in the way they handle it! The language you use to talk about arguments is key here. Be sure to differentiate that arguments and fights are two different things. And be quick to acknowledge that there may be students in your ministry who have to argue in order to stick up for themselves in their homes. That's why framing your conversation about arguments being a healthy, and even at-times positive thing, is so important.

INTERACTIVE: THOUSANDS OF ARGUMENTS

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll show a series of provided images to illustrate how often we argue with our family members.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- The 4 provided image slides
 - A computer and screen large enough for students to view the slides
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TEACHING SCRIPT

Trending: Arguing / Week 1

PRELUDE SOCIAL WORSHIP STORY GROUPS HOME

BOTTOM LINE

CARE MORE ABOUT THE PERSON YOU'RE ARGUING WITH THAN THE POINT YOU'RE TRYING TO MAKE.

INTRODUCTION

3 MINUTES

INTERACTIVE: Thousands of Arguments

This is where you'll show a series of provided images to illustrate how often we argue with our family members.

Fun fact: Almost an entire hour of every day is spent doing one thing with our families: **arguing**. Research shows that we average around 6 arguments a day with our family members. *[Display Interactive Slide #1.]* That's an average of 42 arguments a week. *[Display Interactive Slide #2.]* But it doesn't stop there! We argue about 180 times with our families a month! *[Display Interactive Slide #3.]* That's over two thousand arguments a year!¹ *[Display Interactive Slide #4.]* Talk about a lot of arguing!

If you're anything like me, you find yourself arguing with other people, or listening to other people argue, or getting caught up in arguments you don't want to be in . . . *a lot!*

People argue over....

sports,
and politics,
and family stuff,
and friendship drama,
and what's ultimately the best Billie Eilish song *[or insert your students' favorite artist]*,
and if LeBron really is the greatest of all time.

¹ Francis, Gemma. "Families Spend Average of 49 Minutes a Day Arguing, Study Claims." Independent. July 26, 2018. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/family-arguing-spend-time-minutes-day-a8464581.html>

You might feel like you spend a ton of your conversations with other people just arguing!

Seriously, stop and think about the last argument you got into or witnessed with someone else. Was it this week? This morning? Five minutes before you walked in the door today? What was it about? Something really big and important? Or something seemingly pointless? Either way, I know how you feel. Because honestly, I've been there more times than I can count!

TELL A PERSONAL STORY

Tell a story from your own life that illustrates the following thoughts or ideas . . .

- Talk about a big argument you got into with someone else (preferably in middle school).
- Share not only what the argument was about and who it was with, but how being in the middle of it made you feel.
- Be sure the subject matter is age appropriate and something middle schoolers will relate to!

Why am I telling you all this? Well, whether you realize it or not, **arguments happen all around us**. They happen a lot, with all kinds of different people, over all kinds of different things. And honestly, it will probably be this way for the rest of your life. I mean, all you have to do is glance at social media to see people arguing over things like politics and religion to know that's true!

Arguments are everywhere you look. And I think most of us probably feel like all arguments are bad. I mean, conflicts usually don't make you feel great. And they can be really difficult and uncomfortable to have. In fact, I think most of us try to avoid arguing if we can, right? We may have strong opinions about things, but we don't argue them because we want to fit in and not stand out. We don't want to offend anyone or make someone upset. But here's the thing: Not all arguments are bad. **Arguing can actually be good**, if it's done in a way that's healthy and respectful.

That's why I think it's an important subject to talk about. Because if we don't learn how to argue in a healthy way, the quality of our relationships with our friends, our family members, our teammates, the people in our Small Group, and pretty much everybody we come in contact with is on the line.

TENSION

4 MINUTES

You see, **conflict is a part of life**. And that's **because relationships are a part of life**. Whether it's a friend, a boyfriend or girlfriend, a classmate, a parent, a sibling, a coach, someone in your Small Group, or a random person on social media, at some point, you're going to come into conflict. In other words, you're going to argue.

And that can be challenging for a lot of reasons.

For starters, feelings are usually involved. People don't usually fight about something they don't care about. Think about it! When you fight with your parents over your grades, it's because your parents care about the grades you get. When you fight with your best friend about the lie they told you, it's because you care that your friends are honest. When you see adults fighting about things like who should be the next president, it's because they care about choosing the best person for the job. A lot of times, **we argue simply because we care a lot about what we're arguing about**.

Or, **we care about who we're arguing with**. You don't want to see your friend make a bad choice. You don't want your girlfriend to break up with you. You don't want your older sibling to talk to you that way. So, you argue. Not because you want to, but because you care that much about the other person. In those cases, your feelings are an even bigger deal, because, as it

often happens in arguments, our feelings get hurt. Someone says something harsh, or rude, or deeply hurtful in the heat of an argument, and well, those things are hard to come back from.

So, what do we do? Well, sometimes **we avoid the person altogether**. We don't talk to them, we ghost them, we completely disappear. We hope that eventually, the hurt feelings or the reasons why we argued will disappear, too.

Or maybe **we do talk about it, just not to them**. Instead of talking to the person we've argued with, we talk to everyone else. But that can't really get us anywhere closer to solving the issue, can it?

I think one of the biggest reasons arguments can be challenging to navigate is this: The other person thinks differently than we do. Maybe you've fought with a friend who thought using certain words was okay, but you 100% believed those words were hurtful. Or maybe you've fought with a teammate because they had a totally different strategy on how to win the game. Maybe you've seen people argue in the comments section of Instagram because they had totally opposite views from each other. Regardless of who is arguing, usually this is what happens: Instead of listening to what someone else has to say, or talking to them calmly about our viewpoint, or even ignoring it altogether, we jump right into an argument. Why? Because, honestly, we can't understand how they could think differently than we do!

So, what do we do? We spend our energy trying to convince them that we're right. After all, isn't that the whole point of an argument? To prove your point? To get the other person to come to your side? To win? To be right?

See, I think the biggest problem we have when it comes to the way we navigate arguments is that we feel like there has to be a winner and a loser. And I don't know about you, but I definitely don't like to lose!

That's the mindset a lot of us have when it comes to arguments. **We want to win. We want to be right**. And it doesn't matter what we have to say or do to make sure, at the end of it, we come out on top.

But what if that's the problem holding us back? What if arguing to win isn't really a win at all? What if trying to be right isn't actually right?

Remember what we said: Conflict happens. No matter how hard we may try to avoid it or distance ourselves from it, at some point, we're going to find ourselves arguing with someone (or being argued with!). And because that's the case, I think it's important that we learn a better way to handle it. A way that allows us to aim for more than just being right.

TRUTH

3 MINUTES

Today, we're going to look at a verse in the New Testament of the Bible written by Jesus' half-brother, **James**. James wrote a letter to a group of Christians in the early church, and there's some wisdom that's an absolute game changer when it comes to how we can handle arguments. Check it out:

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)

Notice the word James used here: **everyone**. So basically, James came out of the gate saying, "What I'm about to tell you? It's for *everyone*. Not just the people I agree with, not just the people who think they're right, not just the people with the biggest tempers or the most passionate voices. This is for all of us."

Now, because James wrote this letter to people who were following Jesus, I think the instruction is even more powerful. The message is for everyone, but it's especially important for those of us who believe in Jesus. **As followers of Jesus, this is how we're supposed to communicate to other people.** This is how we're supposed to argue.

So, what did James say we're supposed to do? First, he told us to **"be quick to listen."** In other words, when you find yourself in an argument, **listen first.** Do your best to hold off from speaking until you've actually made an effort to listen. To hear what the other person is saying. I think just applying this first piece of wisdom alone could solve a lot of our disagreements, don't you? So often the reason our arguments get so heated or go on for so long is because we don't make an effort to listen to the other person. Or, we don't feel like they're listening to us!

James followed that by telling us to be **"slow to speak."** Now for some of us, this one is particularly difficult! We want to speak what's on our minds all the time, but especially in an argument. The thought of not saying what we think or feel? That's just crazy!

But remember, slow to speak doesn't mean saying "no" to speak. It doesn't mean that we just sit back and take it. James wasn't asking us not to defend ourselves or our points of view. Instead, he was asking us to pause before we do. To stop before we talk. **To think before we speak.** I don't know about you, but in my experience, most of the things I've regretted in arguments are things I've said without thinking about them first. Taking a minute to pause—choosing to be slow to speak—could be the answer to that.

If James were writing this letter today, then he might also include, "Be slow to text, slow to post, slow to comment, slow to talk behind someone's back." Whatever the response may be for you, pause and think about it before you actually do it.

All of this really adds up to the final thing James wrote here: be **"slow to become angry."** This is a total shift in the way we approach arguments. After all, aren't we usually arguing *because* we're angry? James wasn't asking us *not* to be angry. He wasn't asking us to ignore our feelings. But he was asking us to lead with another feeling—a stronger feeling—in our arguments: love. Choosing to be slow to become angry means **choosing love when we want to hate.** It means focusing on the person, not the point we're trying to make. It means valuing the relationship more than being right.

In other words, when we argue, I think we need to remember this: **Care more about the person you're arguing with than the point you're trying to make.**

APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

Listen, arguing happens; it's part of life. But how it turns out really depends on how we choose to handle it.

So, the next time you find yourself in a position to argue, what would it look like for you to care more about the person you're arguing with than the point you're trying to make? What would it look like for you to try some of what James was talking about here? To be "quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry"? I think if you do, you'll find that the way you argue and the way you feel will both change for the better!

Of course, I know this isn't always easy. So, try giving these few things a shot this week:

- 1) **Memorize this verse.** Really commit James 1:19 to memory. Trust me, it's *that* important. You want this to be in your brain ready to go the next time you find yourself

about to argue. When you memorize it, you'll think of the verse first. It'll be a reminder of how you can handle your argument well.

- 2) **Apply it to someone.** Think about the person in your world who needs you to actually follow James' instructions when it comes to arguing. Who do you find yourself tempted to argue with often? Someone in your family? A friend? A kid on your team? In your mind, put their face next to this verse. Maybe even write both down side-by-side and keep it somewhere you can see it. That way, when you think of that person, you'll also think of James' words on how you can better approach them.
- 3) **Put yourself in their shoes.** This one is tough, I know! But I want to challenge you to see more in that person than just your differences, your argument, and your stance. I want you to try to see and understand their side. This is part of being quick to listen; it's being quick to understand another person's point of view. Jesus could have won every argument ever, but He still talked to people. He still made time to listen to people. He still made an effort to hear their perspectives. And putting yourself in someone else's shoes will help you do the same. It doesn't mean you'll always agree with what they think, but it does mean you'll try to understand *why* they think that. It means you'll try to understand them.

LANDING

1 MINUTE

Remember, **care more about the person you're arguing with than the point you're trying to make.** And that's exactly what we're going to keep talking about in Small Groups today. Not everyone in your Small Group has the exact same view on things that you do. And that's okay! Your Small Group can actually help you understand others' views and ways of thinking.

Now, as you leave, I want you to think about this question: **When I argue, do I argue to win or to understand?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
