

Be a Good Listener

It was a small incident. I noticed that there were a few pieces of paper lying on the ground next to three Year 9 students at lunchtime. Without stopping to ask, I assumed that they were responsible for the litter beside them.

Quickly walking up to the group of boys, I quietly asked them to put the papers in the bins nearby. The boys hesitated, and then followed my instruction. I thanked them and moved on, almost instantly forgetting about it.

I was surprised when a few minutes later, John came to see me about the incident. He asked me, “Did you think we dropped the paper sir?” When I affirmed this was my assumption, he assured me the papers were there before they arrived. He then said, “We picked them up because we respect you, not because we put them there.”

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I immediately apologised, went out and found the other two students and clarified with them my mistake and apologised as well. I thought all was good until the end of the school day. I had not realised that one of the boys had called his dad and complained in between my dealing with the incident and going to sort it out.

A very irate dad strode into my office, dragging a clearly unwilling son in with him. He proceeded to blast me for not dealing with the situation properly.

His son was trying desperately to get his father’s attention. After dad had talked himself out, and I had quietly listened, the son somewhat embarrassedly said, “Dad, it has all been sorted out. There was no need for that.”

I learnt a good lesson that day. I needed to listen before I jumped in and made a decision. You see God is like that. At the Garden of Eden, He knew that Adam and Eve had sinned. He knew exactly where they were. But He still came down as portrayed in Genesis 3, and asked Adam and Eve, “Where are you?” He listened, even though He already knew what had happened.

In Genesis 4, God again intervenes and asks Cain what is going on. God already knows, but He still models the importance of asking and listening before reacting or taking action.

We don’t always get it right as parents or as teachers. But it is certainly worth looking at how God operates. He never needs to ask. He already knows everything. But God models the importance of being a good listener so that we can follow in His steps.

That is the challenge for us today. We need to take the time to listen. To calmly get both sides of the story. To be better prepared to humbly intervene rather than simply react. Adventist education seeks to follow God’s example in all we do.



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