

## A Parable On Listening

A teacher teaching Maths to a five-year-old student asked him, “If I give you one apple and one apple and one apple, how many apples will you have?”

With no hesitation the student replied, “Four!”

The dismayed teacher was expecting an effortless correct answer (three). She was disappointed. “Maybe the child did not listen properly,” she thought. She repeated, “My boy, listen carefully. If I give you one apple and one apple and one apple, how many apples will you have?”

The student had seen the disappointment on his teacher’s face. He calculated again on his fingers. But within him he was also searching for the answer that will make the teacher happy. His search for the answer was not for the correct one, but the one that will make his teacher happy. This time, hesitatingly, he replied, “Four.”

The disappointment stayed on the teacher’s face.

She remembered that this student liked strawberries. She thought maybe he doesn’t like apples and that is making him loose focus. This time with an exaggerated excitement and twinkle in her eyes she asked, “If I give you one strawberry and one strawberry and one strawberry, then how many you will have?”

Seeing the teacher happy, the boy calculated on his fingers again. There was no pressure on him, but a little on the teacher. She wanted her new approach to succeed. With a smile the student enquired, “Three?”

The teacher now had a victorious smile. Her approach had succeeded. She wanted to congratulate herself.

But one last thing remained. Once again she asked him, “Now if I give you one apple and one apple and one more apple how many will you have?” Promptly the student answered, “Four!”. The teacher was aghast. “How my boy, how?” she demanded in a little stern and irritated voice. Very feebly the young student replied, “Because I already have one apple in my bag.”

### **Moral of the Story:**

When someone gives you an answer that is different from what you expect, don’t think they are wrong. There may be an angle that you have not understood at all. You will have to listen and understand, but never listen with a predetermined notion.

Enjoy listening for the next week and practice listening with the intent to understand and simply for the sake of listening alone.