

**You might say that we're all "tangents waiting to happen".** We find something we are excited about, and we can spend hours thinking about it, talking about it, or doing it. Talkers get lost in conversations. IT people become one with their computers. Sports lovers can easily invest three hours in a game without batting an eye. Bookworms get engrossed in a good story and a whole day could pass them by. Movie buffs love "movie talk", rehearsing their favorite lines from their favorite movies. Musicians are always singing songs on their heart, practicing for their next concert, and thinking about music. Mechanics are always out fixing something. Bakers and chefs are frequently in the kitchen talking about what they're going to make next. Storytellers always find people will listen while they tell their stories. How about you?

- **I could go on and on talking about...** (If you are not sure, just ask the people around you. They probably know.)

Tangents aren't good or bad. They just are. When people notice you talking on and on about something you love, they are getting to know you and what you love. And when we take time to listen to people's stories, we showing them that they matter to us. In fact, many people will not trust you with the most important stories of their lives until you have listened to many of their stories and have demonstrated that you care about them.

**So what's the problem with tangents?** Tangents can be consuming. They require extended periods of time and attention. And when we go off on verbal tangents, we frequently don't pay close attention to our audience. **Some of us lose our social awareness because we are so into our passion and storyline.** You may be wondering, "What do you mean by that"?

- **How do you feel when you're with someone who never stops talking?**
- **What do you do when people around you tell story after story?**
- **What do you do when people tell endless stories about people you've never met or about topics you don't care about?**
- **What do you begin to do when people preach or pray too long?**

As long as we are just "hanging out" with people who share our passion, we could spend hours and days talking about and enjoying our similar interests together. But most of us are surrounded by people who don't share our passions. We work together. We live together. And sometimes my tangents and your tangents get downright annoying. We don't have all day to stop and listen to your latest tangent. Have you ever lived or worked with someone who goes off on tangents whenever you start a conversation about anything?

Some people just don't know how and when to end a conversation. Some people never actually have conversations because they're the only one talking all the time. In order to have a meaningful conversation there must be at least two people engaged in the process of communication where there is mutual sharing and listening and responding. And if you find yourself doing most or all of the talking, someone has probably checked out while you're still rambling on. And if you adopt the "good listener" role, you may be there a long time. **Maybe we would all develop healthier communication patterns if we are more eager to listen, slower to speak, and slower to become angry.** (James 1:19)