

Be a Good Listener

John 6:44-45

I. INTRODUCTION: I

I. 2 Christianity is a “taught” religion:

Jn. 6:44-45: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.”

Heb. 8:10: “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

Mk. 16:15: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”; Rom. 1:16-17

Matt. 28:19-20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;”

I Cor. 1:21: “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”

2. In order for one to be saved he must be very careful insofar as his/her hearing of the gospel message is concerned:

A. It is critical that we gain knowledge of God’s Word: 2 Pet. 1:5: add to our faith virtue, to virtue knowledge...

(1) What happens when we reject knowledge?

Hos. 4:6: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.”

(2) As we listen to God’s word, our attitude and state of mind must be in the right place. Consider the parable of the seed and the sower: contrast wayside soil, rocky soil, thorny soil with “good ground”:

Lk. 8:15: “But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.” Cf. Acts 17:11

(3) The Bereans exemplified the “noble and good heart”:

Acts 17:11: “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore, many of them believed...”

B. When we are in a Bible class or listening to a sermon (also prayers, Lord’s Table) we must pay close attention to the words that are spoken

Jn. 6:63: “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”

3. Have you ever gotten sleepy during a sermon?

A. The truth is, any one of us may find our attention wandering now and then.

B. We may have the best intentions of paying close attention to the lesson, but a number of factors may converge to cause us to “nod off.”

(1) The building may be a bit warm causing us to be drowsy.

- (2) We may have not gotten our proper rest the night before; therefore, we need to avoid staying up too late on Saturday night (make worship the priority of our week!).
- (3) We may be taking a needed medication that causes drowsiness.
- (4) We may lack focus, not interested, etc. etc.
- (5) The preacher may not be doing his job!
- C. Long attention spans are difficult even under the best of circumstances; so we need to do everything possible to make sure that on Sunday and Wednesday we are rested and refreshed and ready to worship God in “*spirit and truth*” (Jn. 4:24).
- D. The few hours we spend together on Sunday and Wednesday night should be the most important of our week.
- E. The preacher or Bible class teacher bears a heavy responsibility in this regard; we have the responsibility:
 - (1) To make the subject matter interesting,
 - (2) To present it in a style that is easy to understand, is relevant to our lives, and many other factors contribute to a “live,” wide-awake audience.
 - (3) Preacher/teacher must respect the length of time he speaks (“The mind can only absorb what the behind can endure.”).
- F. But the speaker cannot do it all.
 - (1) It is not enough to prove by the Scriptures that we should be vitally interested.
 - (2) We know that and yet we may still need motivation.
 - (3) We all need to learn how to become better listeners.
- G. **3** For our few minutes together this evening let’s consider some things so we’ll **Be a Better Listener**.

II. DISCUSSION:

I. **4** Be here! **Heb. 10:25-30**

- A. It is impossible for God’s Word to have any influence over you whatsoever if you’re not present to hear it!
- B. Sunday mornings at 9:30 and 10:30 AM and 5:00 PM and Wednesday evening at 7:00 PM should be the focal points of our week!
 - (1) Our goal should be to attend every service possible!
 - (2) We should also encourage those who habitually miss services to attend: tell them how much their attendance encourages you and all the congregation.
- C. Our desire is not for them to come so we can put a check mark by their name on the church roster!
- D. Rather, remind them of our mutual obligation and privilege: **Heb. 10:24**: “*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,*”
- 2. **5** Proper mindset: This is the most important factor when it comes to being a good listener of God’s Word:
 - ☛ Open heart and mind: **Matt. 13:10-16**

Lk. 8:15: “But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.”

Acts 17:11-12: “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.”

☛ ****Deep and abiding thirst for God’s Word:**

Matt. 4:4: “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”

Job 23:12: “I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.”

Psa. 19:7-11: “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.”

Rom. 1:16-17

☛ ****Treat God’s Word as God’s Word:** Jn. 17:17; Titus 1:2

1 Thess. 2:13: “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”

2 Tim. 3:16-17: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”; Jn. 16:13; Jude 3

☛ ****Burning desire to hear the truth:**

1 Pet. 2:2: “as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,”

Psa. 119:131: “I opened my mouth and panted, For I longed for Your commandments.”

Psa. 119:162: “I rejoice at Your word As one who finds great treasure.”

Prov. 23:23: “Buy the truth, and sell it not...”

☛ **6 Sincere love of the truth:**

Psa. 119:97: “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.”

2 Thess. 2:10-12: “and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

Prov. 8:17: “I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me.”

Prov. 7:1-2: “My son, keep my words, and treasure my commands within you. 2 Keep my commands and live, and my law as the apple of your eye.”

☛ ****Trust in the power of God’s Word:**

Rom. 1:16-17: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”*

Heb. 4:12-13: *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”*

Acts 20:32: *“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”*

☛ ****Possess a questioning mind:**

Mk. 4:24: *“Take heed what you hear.”*

Lk. 8:18: *“Therefore take heed how you hear.”*

Acts 17:11: *“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”*

Ask questions, be inquisitive; it’s so easy to put our minds in “neutral” and misunderstand.

Also, be on guard for false teaching:

1 Jn. 4:1: *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”*

Every preacher/teacher that stands before an audience should welcome thoughtful questions and constructive criticism.

3. **7** Practical, concrete steps to better listening:

A. **** Sit in a place conducive to better listening:**

- (1) Sit toward the front of the auditorium; close enough that you can hear the speaker and see the powerpoint outline.
- (2) Doing this not only leads to better hearing the speaker, but it improves the “oneness” of feeling, so essential to good communication.
- (3) It puts fewer distractions between you and the speaker; it allows you to better “read” his expressions, gestures, etc.
- (4) It also makes for better singing and a “closer” feeling for the Lord’s Supper and other aspects of worship.
- (5) Yes, there are some that may need to sit closer to the back (e.g., mothers with babies, sick and elderly who need easier access to the restrooms, etc. But don’t sit in the back to hide or be the first one out after the closing prayer!).

B. **** Be a participant, not an observer:**

- (1) In Christianity all saints are priests in a holy, royal priest hood (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).
- (2) That makes every Christian present a participant in worship; all are to pray and sing with the leader, all are to remember Christ in the communion, all are to give freely with the Lord’s work in mind, all are disciples (“a learner”).
- (3) Being a true learner is not a passive process, it requires distinct participation with the teacher/preacher; with all who lead us in worship.

C. ****** Take notes, learn to outline the message.

- (1) Some are content to jot down the Scriptures used - and that is good.
- (2) But this can be done without much thinking with the speaker.
- (3) If we would make an effort to jot down the main points (in our own brief wording) and note their relation to one another and to the subject, we would find ourselves much more of a participant - and certainly a much better listener (relate to my study habits).

D. ****** Question what you hear:

- (1) Is that a valid point, proven by the Scripture used? Was the Scripture used in its proper context?
- (2) You will not necessarily be able to think the matter through during the sermon, but by putting a question mark beside the point will remind you to “check it out” later.
- (3) It is possible that one can be a “noble Berean” (**Acts 17:11**: “they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”) without becoming a habitual critic of the work of others.
- (4) Learn how to make constructive criticisms, any sound preacher will welcome it (don’t have a double-standard for self vs. preacher!).

E. ****** Listen with the intention of making this your message, when you have time to think it through.

- (1) How would you tell this to others? 90% comprehension rate!
- (2) How could you improve on it, to fit it to someone’s needs you plan to teach?
- (3) This point of view can have an amazing effect on your attention span.

F. ****** Make self-application of the lesson.

- (1) Take the lesson personally, not “I hope old so and so is getting this!”
- (2) Ask yourself: “How can this improve my life for Christ?”
- (2) Ask yourself: “How does this lesson fit my personal needs?”
- (3) Listen with a tender conscience (Lk. 8:15), ready to learn and adjust your life accordingly.

III. CONCLUSION: 8

1. Only good listeners will have the blessings of Jesus Christ.
2. John said, “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it;” (Rev. 1:3)
3. The Savior said, “Blessed are your ears, for they hear.” (Matt. 13:16)
4. He also said, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6).
5. Do any of those passages describe you?! They all should!
6. With a little practice on the above, and this kind of incentive, you may not notice the preacher ran overtime.

Adapted from a sermon (*How To Listen In*) by Robert F. Turner.