

Highlight (Scripture references and Introduction.)

Romans 10:17; Luke 11:28; Psalm 119:18

In this lesson we will continue to study the discipline of *Bible-Intake*, looking specifically at *Hearing the Word of God*. This is anyway we can audibly hear the proclamation of God's Word. Of course there are many ways we do this as Christians. It can be easy as listening to an audio Bible while you find yourself preparing your kid's lunch for the next day, listening to a sermon on Bible-Radio while driving to work, or in your Sunday School/small group while the Word is being audibly read aloud. These are just a few examples of how we can intentionally practice this spiritual discipline.

Several years ago, I had a goal to memorize as many scripture verses as I possibly could over the course of an entire year. I used many tools to do this. I listened to scripture songs, where people added music to verses (word-for-word from scripture). I also used my smart phone to record my own voice reading the verses so I could listen throughout the day over and over at any moment I had free time (in the doctor's office, at a red light, etc.) This sub-discipline is a great way to focus on Bible-Intake. I love what Robby Gallaty says: "It's no enough that we get into the Word, but it's when the Word of God gets into us!" We have to allow the language of scripture to be so apart of us from the inside out. It invades our minds and affects our actions and behavior. This is essential in our walk and growth as a believer.

Paul said in Romans 12:2: *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* This renewing of our minds is God changing how we see the world. We begin to see the world like Jesus sees it. We begin to have a more Kingdom-minded attitude. This is how we are transformed into godliness.

Some people think that they can miss church often and not be affected by this choice. No doubt, we worship Jesus everywhere we go. But there is something special about hearing the Word of God with your local church. Jesus taught the Word. Now, we are the generation that has been entrusted with it. How are you stewarding the Word?

Explain (Context and Commentary for the Scriptures.)

Point 1: Hear it regularly verses accidentally, when you feel like it, or not at all! (Romans 10:17)

If you've ever been to a third-world country, you will understand how many creature-comforts we have here in the USA. Things like air conditioning, windows with screens to prevent mosquitos, nicely paved roads to drive on that don't beat your body down from the potholes. This list can continue to grow too!

In any developed country in the West, we really have it made. Food is always available and you really don't even need to plan ahead. In most countries around the world people begin with food preparation long before the sunrise. Not us, right? We have a number of restaurants with many options to choose from less than 5-10 minutes down the road.

We don't even have to physically read anymore. When we feel too tired to pick up a book, all we have to do is push play and we can listen to an audiobook. The same is true with our Bible-Intake. Most of the Bible apps on any smart device can play Bible audio from various translations. We can listen to famous and gifted preachers from all over the world with a click of the button. And yet, with all of these conveniences, only 14% of people admit to reading their Bible every day. (Barna Research)

They say the average person doesn't respond to the Gospel on the first experience of it. It can take multiple people sharing the message of Christ for the seed of faith to begin to grow. The same is true for our faith after salvation. We need to constantly water and cultivate our faith with godly practices.

Paul is sharing about *faith coming from hearing*, in the context of people believing in Christ or rejecting Him. Another element of regularly hearing the Word is based upon our sharing our faith with others. If we are not normally feasting on the Word, we will be less apt to share our faith. If our walk is inconsistent, why would we desire for others to have what we don't possess?

We need to discipline ourselves to hear the Word on a regular basis. It's the foundation to our faith. Coming to church can be a primary way we practice this discipline. Listening to the word of God as the preacher preaches. Attending Bible-study weekly. We can't leave it to chance or simply not hear it at all.

▫ Questions:

1. Do you have a time when you intentionally focus on hearing from God through the public reading of God's Word?
2. How can we allow our family members to hear the Word on a normal basis?
3. Why do you think Bible-Intake is so challenging sometimes?

Point 2: Hearing will help us keep it! (Luke 11:28)

It can be really frustrating when kids don't seem to listen when you ask them a question or give them an instruction. You might wonder if there's a problem or if they're ignoring you on purpose.

A lot depends on their age. When kids are little, they often don't seem to be listening. They may be wrapped up in a game they're playing. Or they may hear you but not look at you, so you don't realize they are listening.

As kids get older, they typically learn a simple social rule—when someone is talking, you stop and look at the person, so the person knows you're listening.

Sometimes, though, it becomes obvious that a child doesn't listen very well. What could be causing that? It's possible the child has a hearing problem, and that's the first thing to check out. But there are other reasons kids have a hard time listening.

Two common cases are trouble with language or trouble with following directions. Focus challenges can also play a role. No matter what's causing the difficulty, it's important to know that many times kids don't mean to be disrespectful. They just need help building the skills they need for listening. (excerpted from B. Cunningham)

Hearing from God isn't the end goal for us either, but we as God's children, we have to listen and *keep it*. We can become so easily deceived just because of what we know sometimes. The Apostle Paul says that knowledge has a tendency to puff up. (1 Corinthians 8:1) Again, hearing isn't the main point. Like James writes: *but be doers of the word, and not hearers only*, we have to live it out consistently. (James 1:22)

When we are faithful to the Word, we become more Christ-like. There are too many people that identify with Jesus with only their words. God has called His children to a deeper and meaningful relationship with Him. He is our Lord. Without the special revelation of scripture, we can't know the Lord, much less know what He desires for our lives.

▫ Questions:

1. Why is it so easy to neglect the keeping of God's Word?
2. Do you naturally try to apply a sermon to your life?
3. We know the Word speaks to us as we actively listen. What's the difference from hearing and listening?

Point 3: Hearing it with preparation. (Psalm 119:18)

Winning in sports starts from the preparation that happens years, months, and up to the last few hours before the competition. However, it is completely normal for the anxiety to intensify especially on the day before the event. There are mental and physical strategies to help reduce nervousness and enable athletes to perform at their best. An athlete will underperform every time without the right preparation.

It's interesting to listen to congregations before the pastor steps on the platform. In almost every church I've ever attended, the sound is the same. Most of our churches sound like a sporting event before the game begins. This isn't a bad thing though. Why? Because fellowship is an important factor of church life. We need to interact with one another. We should desire this as a church family.

But there is another approach that may give some balance to the beginning of our worship service. We should also be prepared for what we are about to experience. Our hearts should also long to give reverence and serious consideration for what we are about to do. WE are about to worship the Lord. We will hear from His holy Word. We should do this prayerfully and thoughtfully with expectation.

There must be some preparation. Here is a brief list of how we can prepare to hear God's Word: 1. We should confess our sins so we can approach His throne in purity. It's not our personal manufactured purity, but it's the purity of Jesus in and through our lives. 2. We may need to go to another believer and make things right before we worship God. (Matthew 5:24) 3. Knowing that others may hear God's Word and He can do a work in someone's life can call us to prayer. 4. We should desire that God would be honored and glorified in the service we are about to participate in.

The mentioned above isn't an exhaustive list. Maybe you have some other thoughts of preparation too. We as believers should have some preparation before we hear the Word of God. We hear so we can *keep it!*

▫ **Questions:**

1. Do you think there is little to no preparation with many people as they come to a worship service?
2. What could help with the lack of preparation to hear the Word?
3. Why is it important to prepare for the Word?

Application (What does God want me to do?)

God may have challenged you to practice the discipline of *hearing* his Word from this lesson. How will you apply this to your normal walk with God? God always wants us to apply what He has revealed to us.

Respond (What specific commitment will I make?)

In this lesson we have learned about: 1) *Hearing regularly*; 2) *hearing will help us keep it*; and 3) *hearing it with preparation*. Is there any specific commitment you will make in light of learning about this discipline?

Additional Study Resources

1. Additional Bible Study tools are available at www.biblecc.com.
2. Additional Bible Study tools are available at www.biblegateway.com.
3. Book entitled: Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life by Donald S. Whitney

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