

## *Are You Listening Carefully?*

Mark 4:23-25 (NKJV) ““If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” 24 Then He said to them, “Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. 25 “For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.””

### **I. INTRODUCTION:**

***A. During His earthly ministry, Jesus often concluded a lesson by crying out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”***

1. E.g., concerning John the Baptist – (“he is Elijah who is to come).

**a) Matthew 11:15**

2. E.g., the parable of the sower –

**a) Matthew 13:9**

3. Etc.

***B. In His letters to the seven churches of Asia, Jesus concludes each with a similar saying: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” – Revelation 2:7,11,12,29; 3:6,13,22.***

***C. What is the point of such sayings?***

1. It is akin to saying “What is being said is very important, so pay attention and listen!” (we might say to our children today “listen up!”) cf. Mark 4:23-25 (above)

2. It illustrates that Jesus had a problem that often exists today.

**a) Many people simply don’t listen!**

**b) Or don’t listen to understand.**

***D. I have become particularly impressed with the importance of hearing partly due to my own hearing disability (which can make for some embarrassing situations).***

***E. I am convinced that many today don’t appreciate the importance of listening well...***

1. Too big a hurry to express their own opinion?

2. Think that truth is in the abstract, so any opinion holds the same weight, value?

3. Simply don't care?
4. But the problem concerned Jesus...
5. So, I believe it is appropriate to ask, "Are you listening carefully?"
6. It might be profitable to begin by pointing out the types of listeners...

## II. **THREE "TYPES" OF LISTENERS**

### **A. THE "DULL OF HEARING"...**

1. Some of the Hebrew Christians were like this –
  - a) **Hebrews 5:11**
  - b) **Note that when a person has this problem, it is hard for others to explain things to them!**
  - c) **The fault is not with the "subject" material, nor the "presenter," but with the "listener"!**
2. Isaiah wrote of such people (Isaiah 6:9-10?), and Jesus applied it to many in His day.
  - a) **Matthew 13:13-15**
  - b) **People are this way because they are DULL OF HEART!**
  - c) **This prevents them from:**
    - (1) Understanding God's truth.
    - (2) Turning from sin to God
    - (3) And being healed (saved) by God!
    - (4) Who would WANT to be this kind of listener?

### **B. There are those with "itching ears"...**

1. Paul describes these...
  - a) **2 Timothy 4:3-4**

2. Such people listen only to that which is pleasing to them...

**a) So they don't like "sound doctrine" (which often requires the kind of preaching mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:2...**

(1) 2 Timothy 4:2

**b) They will find the teachers they want...but then they turn from the truth to "fables"**

(1) "fables" from *muthos* "a tale, myth, or fiction"

**c) People today are often afflicted with this hearing problem (and at the same time self-deceived "I want the truth")**

### **C. Those who hear with a "Noble and good heart"...**

1. Jesus spoke of these...

**a) Luke 8:15**

2. The Bereans were listeners of this kind.

**a) Acts 17:11**

**b) They were "fair-minded" (NKJV), thus willing to give Paul a fair hearing.**

**c) It showed in how they "received" (or listened to) the word: "with all readiness."**

(1) We should all be this kind of listener!

*(a) But why?*

## **III. WHY GOOD LISTENING IS IMPORTANT**

### **A. It is essential to "blessedness"**

1. Matthew 13:16-17

2. For those willing to listen properly, there are wonderful things to learn.

3. Many things which great people (such as Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, etc.) did not have the opportunity to learn.

4. Things pertaining to wonderful blessings that are now available in Jesus Christ!

**a) Cf. Ephesians 1:3**

5. We will miss out on these blessings if we do not listen carefully!

***B. It is essential to saving “Faith” – Romans 10:17.***

1. God has ordained that we be saved through faith in Jesus Christ –

**a) Romans 1:16-17**

2. However, such faith comes through the proclamation of the gospel, often involving our listening to a preacher –

**a) Romans 10:14**

**b) Romans 10:17**

3. While one can certainly gain faith through reading God’s Word (John 20:30-31) the fact remains that most are dependent upon what they first hear proclaimed.

**a) One reason faith is often lacking is because people simply are not good listeners.**

**b) They miss the evidence in God’s Word which produces faith!**

4. Does your “listening” hinder the development of your faith?

***C. It is essential to “bearing fruit”***

1. Luke 8:15

2. In the parable of the sower, the only kind of soil (heart) capable of bearing fruit was the one which listened properly.

3. That is because bearing fruit come from “understanding” the grace of God.

**a) Cf. Colossians 1:6**

(1) Note that the gospel was bearing fruit in the Colossians...

(2) But that was “since the day you heard and knew (“understood”, NAS) the grace of God in truth;”

4. Only by listening well can we “understand” God’s grace, and be thus motivated to bear fruit to His glory!

**D. It is essential to avoid “drifting” –**

1. Hebrews 2:1-3
2. There is a real danger of drifting, by neglecting “so great a salvation”
3. The only solution is to “give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard.”
4. POOR listening is often one of the first steps to apostasy!

**E. It is essential to avoid “rejection” and “condemnation”...**

1. If we do not listen as we should...

**a) Those who teach God’s word have a right to reject us.**

(1) Cf. Matthew 10:14-15

**b) We are judging ourselves unworthy of eternal life.**

(1) Cf. Acts 13:44-49

2. If we reject the gospel (perhaps by poor listening?), the men of Nineveh and the queen of the South will condemn us at the judgment!

**a) Matthew 12:41-42**

**b) The men of Nineveh repented after hearing just one lesson from Jonah; will we reject the gospel of Christ after being given many opportunities?**

**c) The queen of the South went to great lengths to hear the wisdom of Solomon; are we willing to go just a short distance to hear God’s word proclaimed?**

3. Note: the rejection and condemnation is not limited to coming from just these individuals... it will come from God also!

**IV. SUGGESTIONS FOR BETTER LISTENING:**

***A. Hopefully we all will appreciate the wonderful opportunity we have to be able to listen to God’s word ... and the importance of good listening.***

1. How can we improve our ability to listen?

***B. Make “listening” an act of worship.***

1. How you listen to God’s word being read or preached is as much an indication of your devotion to God as to how you pray or sing!
2. So when you have opportunities to listen, do it with an attitude toward worship!

**a) Think of how you would listen if some great person were speaking (Paul, Peter, Stephen...)**

**b) The proclamation of the word of God deserves our attention (no matter the eloquence – or lack thereof -- of the speaker).**

***C. Listen from first to last...***

1. I.e., pay attention all the way through.

**a) Do you expect to understand much of a technical book by simply reading a sentence here and there?**

**b) So it is with listening... sentences, phrases, words, ... to be understood must be heard in light of the context in which they are presented.**

2. Speakers must follow certain rules of speech so as to be understood:

**a) Introduce the subject.**

**b) Present main points with supporting arguments.**

**c) Conclude with a summary...**

(1) So, listeners must listen to ALL the parts to truly understand.

***D. Look at the speaker...***

1. This greatly aids your concentration.

**a) Looking elsewhere makes it easy for your mind to wander.**

**b) Closing your eyes makes it easy for you to “nod off.”**

**c) This requires self-discipline, but it is conducive to developing a longer attention span.**

***E. Read along in your Bible.***

1. You remember a greater percentage of what you both see and hear over what you simply hear.

**a) That is why visual aids are often used in sermons.**

**b) Your greatest visual aid? Your own Bible!**

**c) Your knowledge of the Bible will be greatly improved by doing this.**

(1) May be hard at first to keep up, but persevere and it will soon become easier.

***F. Listen with faith...***

1. I.e., listen with a willingness to accept and believe what is shown in and from God's Word.

2. Notice that those who died in the wilderness did not listen with faith!

**a) Hebrews 4:1-2**

**b) If we do not listen "with faith," the same sort of thing will happen to us; i.e., fall short of our heavenly rest!**

***G. Listen to do...***

1. Are we like the people of Ezekiel's day?

**a) They loved to hear him, but for the wrong reason.**

(1) Cf. Ezekiel 33:30-32

2. Hearing must be accompanied by "doing" to be of any profit.

**a) James 1:22-25**

**V. CONCLUSION:**

***A. To be blessed in what we do...***

1. That is the goal in presenting these thoughts on listening.

2. It all begins with listening in the proper way.

***B. How important is listening?***

1. When it comes to listening to God, very important!

**a) Isaiah 55:3**

- (1) It is essential for the good of our soul!

***C. Today, mercy is offered through Jesus Christ, God's Son. God said: "This is my beloved Son. Hear Him! (Luke 9:35).***

1. Will you hear Jesus today?