

Gain The Most From Your Next Sermon

by Wayne Goff

Years ago I read an article in a business newsletter on how to get the most out of your next seminar. The suggestions could easily be adapted to listening to sermons, and I have often made many of the same suggestions to my listeners. It is not surprising that the Bible places great emphasis on **how** we hear what is being said to us. Jesus taught what an important role the heart plays in our hearing in the parable of the sower (**Luke 8**). Jesus likewise warns every one of the seven churches of Asia to take care how we hear with the words, “*He who has an ear to hear, let him hear*” (**Revelation 2-3**). So a few quick pointers on hearing are always timely and worthy of our consideration:

Cultivate A “Beginner’s Mind”

This idea has been suggested to me and by me before. Every time you go to hear a sermon, even if you’ve heard thousands of them, go with the idea that you’re hearing something new. Go with the expectation that you are going to learn at least one new idea. (We are not suggesting that you wake up every morning in a new world! **Hebrews 6:1-3** tells us to go on to perfection.)

Clear Your Conscience

Whenever I am called on to pray before a sermon is to be preached, I pray that every one of us present might be forgiven of our past sins (based on proper repentance) in order that we might be able to hear the message from God’s Word with a clear conscience. Mind clutter caused by the guilt of sin can hack away at your conscience to the point that it is difficult to concentrate, learn and be more obedient to the Lord. On this same subject, we might suggest that we put out of our minds all matters of a material concern, too. Yes, it takes a decided, diligent effort to get rid of that “Martha syndrome” (**Luke 10:38-42**), but it can be done.

Ask Questions After The Sermon

Sometimes we are a bit timid about asking questions, or challenging what the preacher just said. But I find this to be a very refreshing thing, as a preacher. If someone comes up to me to ask about my lesson, then I know they were listening. That, in itself, is an encouragement. Furthermore, I know that they are thinking for themselves. The point in question may not be so much a disagreement as the listener’s lack of being able to see my progression of logic, or I may lack proper logic in the point being made. Frank discussion while the subject is fresh on your mind is one good way to resolve such matters. Even when someone disagrees with me, or makes me feel a bit uncomfortable in asking a tough question, I would much rather have the question asked. Truth has nothing to fear from investigation, we often say. Well if that is so (and I believe it is), then honest people discussing honest questions will do good and not harm.

Learn From Others

Those in the church often form small, informal discussion groups where someone feels more comfortable discussing things they do not understand. They are less fearful of asking questions that they may think “sound stupid.” Now I am not talking about formulating artificial study groups here, I’m talking about people talking together over what they have heard. Good listeners almost always have such discussions with a husband or wife, a close friend, or occasionally a couple of friends. So if you’re one of those people who never discuss what you hear with anyone else, consider talking with others about the sermon or Bible class, before you forget what you heard. This always solidifies one’s thinking because you have to verbalize what you have been hearing. And that is a test in itself of how well you were listening. Look in the New Testament and see how many times the disciples asked

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